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Akinsanmi, Titilayo Olujumoke

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NETWORKED NPOs IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH: KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Titilayo Olujumoke Akinsanmi

Student No: 0616775D

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Management, University of Witwatersrand, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management (by dissertation in the field of Public and Development Management)

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Supervisor: Ms. Lucienne Abrahams

ABSTRACT

This research sought to understand the knowledge management (KM) practices in use by networked southern non-profit organisations (NPOs), which directly or indirectly impact on their effectiveness. It explores the realm of NPOs, and the concepts of organisational effectiveness (OE) and KM, with the aim of identifying their interrelationships from a theoretical and practical perspective. The three organisations studied are the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), South Africa NGO Network (SANGONet) and Women's Network (Women'sNet).

Using a conceptually formulated research framework, data gathered was analysed to examine the KM concepts of people capacity, systems and procedures, information and knowledge flow and stakeholder relations within and across all three case studies and their use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) as an enabler.

The research concludes with an integrated framework, an addition to the existing body of knowledge on KM theory with key elements for a KM system for effectiveness for networked southern NPOs.

DECLARATION

I declare that this report is my own, unaided work. It is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Management (by dissertation in the field of Public and Development Management) in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

_____

Titilayo Olujumoke Akinsanmi (0616775D)

22nd September 2010

DEDICATION

This report is dedicated to the One who has taught, encouraged and supported me through my life that ‘wisdom is the principal thing…and in all my getting [of wisdom] to seek and get understanding (Bible, Proverbs 4:7).

E she Baba!

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I am grateful to all whom in one way or the other supported this journey of discovery, without which this research would have remained an idea floating around in my mind.

To my friends and family – *e Seun*! Indeed '*aso l'eniyan'*. *A pe fun ara wa*!

To the friends within the APC, SANGONeT and WOMENSNeT – thank you for your assistance, your openness and your accessibility to my many prodding questions. There would be no study without your willingness to participate.

To my Supervisor, Ms. Luci – thank you for your unending patience, willingness to help me learn and grow. I can say that without your continuing encouragement – beyond the call of duty I would not be here yet.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

Association for Progressive Communications	APC
Executive Director	ED
Information and Communications Technologies for Development	ICT4D
Information and Communications Technologies	ICTs
Knowledge Management	KM
Non-profit Organisations	NPOs
Organisational Effectiveness	OE
Southern African Non-Governmental Network	SANGONet
Terms of Reference	ToR
Women's Network	Women'sNet

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CHAPTER 1. THE THIRD SECTOR: CIVIL SOCIETY

1.1. Introduction

The world as we now know it is as a result of a series of evolutions from purely one sectoral form (in some terms - feudal systems) to the one with clear delineations and power. Society has evolved beyond clearly defined areas of government, private sector, and what is traditionally known as the civil society sector. Now, there is more than ever before, a blurring of lines; not just in areas of primary responsibilities but also in the way in which those responsibilities are implemented. This research focuses on the third of these sectors – i.e. civil society.

Civil society is seen as the continuously shifting 'socio-sphere located between the family, the state, and the market and operating beyond the natural confines of national societies, polities and economies' (Anheier & Themudo, 2002). Robertson (1986) drew a distinction between civil society as an 'ensemble of socioeconomic relations and the forces of production', and the state, seen as 'the super-structural manifestation of class relations inside civil society'. Other theorists such as Gramsci (in Bendell, 2000a) see civil society as lying somewhere between the 'coercive relations of the state and the economic sphere of production'.

These 20th century theorists all imply that the notion of the civil society exists in the spaces between the clearly definable elements of the world that is government and the private sector. In other words, civil society is identifiable by what it is not. Its definite description is thus contingent on descriptions of other elements of society, which in themselves continuously evolve, and thus civil society continues to change in size and character as well. Civil society also occupies the unenviable role of watchdog and alternatively, when either of the other two sectors of society fail, take up their function, albeit arbitrarily in most cases. Over the last few years' authors such as Anheier and Themudo (2002) have given credence to a more contemporary definition of civil

society. Chandhoke (2002) also describes civil society as 'located somewhere between the state, the market, and the family'.

Edwards (2000) sees civil society as 'the arena in which people come together to advance the interests they hold in common, not for profit or political power, but because they care enough about [an issue] to take collective action'. These definitions identify the private sector more formally as outside of civil society. The sense of civil society being defined by what it is not, however, remains. Edwards (2000) goes on to emphasise that the role of civil society is to 'occupy the spaces in a healthy democracy and not to substitute it for government' or the private sector. It is within this flexible socio-sphere that we find non-profit organisations.

The growth and expansion of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) can be traced to the alienation of specific needs or voices by states and markets. CSOs emerged as a response to these unmet human needs and to act as a collective rising to fill the vacuum created by states withdrawing, or being unable to give or perform the social functions they should undertake (Bendell, 2000b). Chandhoke (2002:43) suggests that the economic imperatives of the neo-liberal agenda:

> *'dictated [that]: (a) the state, particularly in Third World countries, should withdraw from the social sector; (b) the market should be freed from all constraints; and (c) people in civil society should organise their own social and economic reproduction instead of depending on the state'.*

Teegan, Doh & Vachani (2004) stipulate that civil society organisations came into existence when 'market mechanisms ignored [human] needs and governmental regimes are deemed repressive, weak, or resource-strapped to serve them'. The growth in the importance and 'strength' of CSOs, according to Thielemann (2000), can be directly linked to the retreat of the state from historical areas of activity and the private sectors' ever-growing reach within the larger society.

Kaldor, Anheier & Glasius (2003b) identify four ‘manifestations of global civil society’ in interaction with the state and the private sector. First is what they refer to as ‘new public management’, where civil society serves as sub-contractors to policy makers; then there is the ‘corporatisation’ which is when CSOs partner with the private sector; third is the ‘social capital or self-organisation’ manifestation wherein CSOs build trust through networking, and finally ‘activism’.

The latter is when CSOs monitor and challenge power-holders; be it in the public or private sphere. These manifestations exist within one of four organisation types, as identified by Fottler (1981).

Fottler (1981) identifies four classes of organisations along the continuum between classical, private, profit making firms and strictly governmental agencies. These are private for-profit, private non-profit, private quasi-public, and public. These four types have varied management functions, which are determined by the different sub-sectors of society that they receive their support from. These sub-sectoral dependencies create different values, incentives and constraints for management.

Organisations have emerged over time, that are expressly formed to serve the needs of the polity (Bendell, 2000b) and which fall somewhere within these traditional classifications of organisations identified earlier. One such organisational form that flourishes in, and emerges from, this dynamic called ‘civil society’ is the Non-Profit Organisation (also referred to as Non-Governmental Organisations in some literature).

1.2. Non-Profit Organisations

A Non-profit Organisation (NPO) is defined as an organisation with the primary objective of supporting a development or a social issue, usually of public concern, for non-commercial purposes. NPOs are, in a sense, a hybrid of business enterprise and government, but at the same time different from both. James (1983) indicates that unlike the for-profit organisations (but like government), ‘NPOs usually have no owners

to whom it distributes profits; instead all its resources and seeming profits are ploughed back internally to reach set goals'. On the other hand, unlike government but similar to for-profit organisations, 'NPOs must raise funds on a voluntary basis but do not enjoy the 'powers of voluntary taxation'.

NPOs usually have one of two origins: those established by government but not for profit, and those established without governmental influence either by the private sector or by individuals within the society. The latter are popularly referred to as Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) and appear in article 71 of the United Nations Charter (United Nations, 2003).

NGOs have been described as non-profit-making, independent and campaigning organisations 'whose stated purpose is the promotion of environmental and/or social goals rather than the achievement or protection of economic power in the market place or political power through the electoral process' (Bendell, 2000a). Teegan *et al*. (2004), quoting the UN, describe an NGO as:

> *'…any non-profit, voluntary citizens' group which is organised on a local, national or international level. Task-orientated and driven by people with a common interest, NGOs perform a variety of services and humanitarian functions, bring citizens' concerns to Governments, monitor policies and encourage political participation at the community level. They provide analysis and expertise; serve as early warning mechanisms and help monitor and implement international agreements. Some are organised around specific issues, such as human rights, the environment or health'.*

This level of diversity in NGOs translates to a complex set of goals and missions based on multiple influences. This results in overlapping and diffused relationships within which they are usually accountable (Jegers & Lapsley, 1998). The NGO 'label' though, describes a huge number of organisations that have very little in common beyond the label 'NGO'. For the purposes of this research, non-profit organisations with no

government influence will be used as an all-encompassing term.

1.2.1 NPO characteristics

Lettieri, Borga & Salvoldelli (2004) identify certain factors as characteristic of NPOs. The first of these is the 'existence of strategic goals that are not strictly linked to the creation of economic profit for the stockholders'. That is, there exists a service or commodity from which profit is derived, but the ultimate goal is to be able to use this to pursue the core mission of the organisation which is not-for-profit in nature. They indicate that most NPOs also typically have the need to 'achieve a large consensus on strategy because of their associative nature which is dependent on agreed values and a need for continuous non-financial motivation of human resources'.

This points to another characteristic of NPOs with regards to the presence of voluntary resources which Lettieri *et al.* (2004) say are 'often characterised by heterogeneous experience and knowledge), high motivation, non-continuous presence and high rates of turnover'. NPOs also tend to focus on, and in, the short term, due to these scarce or limited resources; in particular financial. This focus on short-term resource allocation, according to Lettieri *et al.* (2004), results in a 'preference for activities which give immediate results, rather than for long-term investments whose benefits are postponed and uncertain'. NPOs usually also have a strong capacity for establishing 'cooperative relationships with other stakeholders by building communities around specific social needs and problems. The various members of these communities make resources of different types available in order to achieve the agreed goals' (Lettieri *et al*. 2004).

A second characteristic is that NPOs are known to have a strong traditional role for self-organisation and developing social capital and leading activism. Existence in a largely commercial world, though, means NPOs face the need to organise, and to adopt some business practices and technologies to survive in a world where there is fierce competition for funds and skilled manpower, and where effectiveness and accountability to stakeholders is of great importance.

Edwards (2000) argues that the phenomenal growth in NPOs since the Cold War can be traced to three reasons. First, Edwards (2000) sees 'a move away from a belief that free trade and liberalisation is the only recipe for growth and poverty reduction together with a dawning awareness that NPOs are no longer there just to pick up the pieces that fall through the cracks'. Increasingly they have become 'alternatives and forces of transformation'. Second is the growing awareness that their involvement is a 'cost-effective public relations activity and partnership' for government and/or the private sector. Third, these NPOs are an additional, and in most instances, a 'trust worthier', channel for popular participation for those on the margins of society.

Chandhoke (2002) puts it a little more directly:

> *'Ironically, the idea that people in civil society should organise their own reproduction has emerged at exactly the same moment as globalisation has drastically eroded the capacity of the same people to order their own affairs … [NPOs have] emerged … to take over functions hitherto reserved for the state.'*

Factors such as 'the increasing numbers of "emerging" nations which are embracing democracy and the hegemony of market based solutions; the communications revolution; and the increasing levels of social inequality and environmental degradation have all contributed directly to the increase in size and importance of the NPO sector' (SustainAbility, 2003). NPOs are an increasingly important phenomenon and their rise is both a reflection of profound changes within human experiences identified and a source of that change. They are increasingly central to both the current transformation, as a counter to the transformation, of society visible by globalisation.

This interaction and involvement with international, regional and national governance is helping southern nations, and as a result NPOs in particular, to mobilise and organise themselves like never before. In the developing nations NPOs have the unenviable role of offering an active alternative to 'total market-driven private sector domination of societies' that have non-active or absent governments (Glasius & Kaldor, 2002). Though in most cases NPOs can only 'operate … within the narrow confines set by dominant states and international capital, they can amend international structures but not transform them' (Glasius & Kaldor, 2002). Thus even though they operate with a lot more freedom, and across a wider spectrum in society, they are still very limited with regards to their actual power to create policy-related change.

It is probably this 'combination of growing significance (with increasing numbers of previously unheard voices in international/regional discourse) and crucially circumscribed power that can lead NPOs into the treacherous terrain in which they walk a fine line between getting too close to funding bodies, the State and corporations (and thereby risking their independence, legitimacy and the trust of their grass roots support), whilst struggling to survive and maintain their integrity and effectiveness in

the face of increasingly subtle attack from the vested interests that they challenge' (Gray, Bebbington & Cillison, 2006).

These largely neutral voices of NPOs attempt to balance the development debate but are even more threatened by the treacherous terrain referred to above when they are perceived as, or are actually, not being managed effectively.

1.2.2 NPOs and management

Management broadly refers to the process of leading and directing all or part of an organisation through the deployment and manipulation of resources (human, financial, material, intellectual or intangibles) with the main objective of achieving the highest productivity or service delivery possible. In both philosophy and theory, the 'manager' (which could be an individual or a collective) is compelled to consider particular viewpoints, value guidelines and ideas, amongst a whole range of other factors, to perform the task of management effectively. There are three generally accepted theories of management: the traditional or autocratic theory of management; the human relations or *laissez faire* theory; and the human resources or democratic theory of management.

Fayol (1841-1925) and Taylor (1856–1915) both through their scholarly lifetimes viewed management as primarily concerning the structures and activities of formal or official organisations. They described the various branches of management and their inter-relationships. This theory of management is largely based on power relations in an organisation. Its major characteristics include a lack of trust in the people, close and autocratic supervision and a very top-down management process. It is a repetitive style of management where subordinates are expected, without questioning, to obey orders with no room for unauthorised individual initiative or creativity.

Other early theorists, including Tead (1891–1973) and Mayo (1880–1949) applied the principles of psychology and sociological perspectives (human relations theory) to

management. This theory is based on the belief that extraordinary attention should be given to the well-being of employees, including the satisfaction of social needs. Practitioners of this theory of management believe firmly that if workers are treated well, they will be motivated to perform better. Managers practice an open-door business approach. Managers to a certain level consult with lower cadres in the organisation in the spirit of participative management. A shortfall though is that workers are not always included in the decision-making process.

A third management theory deals with humans as resources of the organisation – it's most prized resources. It emphasises not treating but on using employees well.

Staff members are utilised according to their skills, knowledge and capabilities. They are encouraged to use their thinking abilities and initiative, which in turn builds trust and responsibility (Legge, 2004). This is closely linked with the modern-day social systems theory as developed by Luhmann (1927–1998) identifying amongst others the conceptualisation of 'organising and managing human resources as social processes' and the new importance of 'individuals as essential elements' in the organisation.

1.3. Contemporary management theories

The lines between these linear approaches to management have become blurred in the last two decades with the emergence of a non-rigid or scalar management structure reflected in networked organisations, including NPOs. Senge (1990) in his book, The Fifth Discipline states that '…there must be basic innovation in traditional methods of management and governance…growing uncertainty, economic and political turbulence, and the increasing interdependence of global markets and global enterprises have led to calls for radical change'.

Systems theory has had a significant effect on management science and understanding organisations. A system in this context is a collection of parts unified to accomplish an overall goal and having inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes and

sharing feedback between each of these four aspects. In an organisation inputs would include resources such as raw materials, money, technologies and people. Outputs would be products or services to a market. Outcomes could be enhanced quality of life or productivity for customers/clients, productivity. Feedback would be information from human resources carrying out the process, and customers/clients using the products, etc. Feedback also comes from the larger environment of the organisation, e.g., influences from government, society, economics, and technologies.

The Ubuntu (meaning humanness) management philosophy is one such theory, based on the traditional African concept of one being a person through other human beings. According to Broodryk (2005), it is 'the application of a more human approach to management for better productivity and service' in a democratic, happy and informal environment. This management philosophy allows for openness in a responsible way within an organisation.

Another unnamed, but emerging model, of management features new twists contributed by technological revolution, which pushes one to do more, faster. Associated with this is the rate at which information is generated, shared and converted into knowledge by corporate bodies, NPOs and even individuals. This notion is further discussed in the section on knowledge management in the second chapter of this research. A last twist is found in the aftermath of the reengineering movement, which has resulted in doing more with fewer people.

1.3.1 NPO management

All organisations need a basic management philosophy, which forms the foundation for implementing its vision, mission and strategy. Such a philosophy is about making clear sense of a process and/or existing practices, and a continuing culture of dynamism by being positively critical to rethink such practices – in essence being able to utilise theory and accept that it only precedes practice. Hatten (1982) states that NPO management is often treated as the poor stepchild in management thinking, with

emphasis placed on profit making organisations. Rigid adherence to a particular management style may not respond appropriately to the ever-changing environment encountered in the NPO sector (Wasdell, 1980). This has over the years, fed by the notion that indeed the generic theory of management requires continuous empirical testing.

The generic approach to management theory and practice is based on the assumption (largely untested) that the differences that exist between the four organisational classes referred to by Fottler (1981) are insignificant in terms of their effect on management processes. Organisations in each of the four classes though, do differ from one another in terms of their characteristics and the conditions and constraints under which management processes are carried out. Gasell (2000) suggests that there 'are difficulties inherent in managing non-profit organisations that differentiate them from the private sector'. A definite example is that management decisions are often made by a diverse group of individuals in NPOs, including board members, professional managers and technical specialists. This diverse group with varied backgrounds, views and priorities all have some managerial responsibility.

Such splintered management roles pose multi-layered problems for the NPO involved in social change, in terms of managerial accountability for decisions, the separation between strategic and operations and service/product implementation decisions, and the general direction of the organisations development. In an ideal scenario, the board of the NPO serves as the final arbitrator of conflict since it bears ultimate responsibility for the organisation's use of resources in achieving societal change. This is only possible where the boards' interests are balanced and not skewed in either of two extremes – i.e. having no direct interest or having too detailed an interest by engaging in the day-to-day management of the NPO.

1.3.2 NPOs and social change

Change occurs when an outcome or goal has been attained and the subsequent result

either eliminates the cause of the problem or alters programmes, policies, funding streams and/or services to reduce the impact of the problem on a long-term basis. Social change occurs when there is an attempt at a structural transformation of political, social and economic systems and institutions to create a more equitable and just society. It systemically delves behind immediate problems, involves new ways of applying resources to underlying causes, and results in tangible and enduring benefits. This includes a shift in the character of the institutions, the behaviour or the relations of a society, the community of people, and/or other social structures (Shackman, Liu & Wang, 2005). In most communities, NPOs are at the forefront of creating these social changes.

Social change-oriented NPOs endeavour to serve or give voice to an under-represented constituency or community, or they may advocate on a specific issue. This is often a 'thankless' process with NPOs having to work with constantly shifting resources from conceptualisation through to implementation, and in attracting further support from individuals, donor agencies, government and/or businesses.

It is important to note that not all NPOs that have the characteristic of being completely separate from government are active on social issues. Gordenker and Weiss (1995) in their article on pluralising global governance identify three significant deviations from the specifications on NPOs described so far.

These include GONGOs (government organised non-governmental organisations) which achieved notoriety during the Cold War and were fronts for administration activities with funding from government); QUANGOs (quasi non-governmental organisations) which receive the bulk of their funding from public coffers; and DONGOs (donor organised non-governmental organisations) distinguished by their formation and funding through the perceived needs of donors.

NPOs in their extensive variety bring expertise, commitment and grassroots perceptions that they utilise in achieving their goal of social change via better

governance in an improved world. They function in a variety of ways, including the delivery of services from intangible technical advice to more tangible resources for relief, development and other purposes. In the United Nations (UN) system they are referred to as 'observers' or as having consultative status. They also play educational and advocacy roles, primarily by influencing citizens and targeting key decision makers via mostly unofficial participation in key decision sectors such as parliament.

Human rights advocates, gender activists, indigenous peoples and representatives of defined interests, over the last two decades, have become more active in political work arenas once reserved for governments and their representatives. This growth is largely attributable to the demands by informed citizens for accountability from the private and government sectors. In a world rife with so many systemic problems, NPOs work diligently to respond to the challenges that they face in bringing about social change in effective ways. The power that they bring to the table is their ability to organise, educate, and mobilise. In no other section of the world is this of more importance than in the largely less-developed southern hemisphere.

1.4. Southern NPOs

Southern NPOs are loosely defined in their operations in developing nations by their origination and geographical location in the global south, or in some rare cases, simply by their focus on only societal issues typical to the global south. They are characterised by their focus on serving very specific societal interests by focusing their advocacy and/or operational efforts on social, political and economic goals such as equity, education, health, environmental protection and human rights, amongst others. The majority of their work is centred on influencing key decision-makers and a relatively 'young' private sector by working to transform policy and existing relationships among all sectors of society.

Generally, these NPOs, like their northern counterparts, can be classified by the benefits they create: those that produce benefits geared toward their members and

social purpose NPOs that promote broader social interests. The latter is usually broken down based on their principal activities of advocacy or operational NPOs. Advocacy NPOs work on behalf of others who lack the voice or access needed to promote their own interests; while operational NPOs are said to provide critical goods and services to clients with unmet needs. Although some NPOs engage exclusively in either advocacy or operational efforts, '…many are hybrids, which use both advocacy and operational means to achieve social benefit' (Parker, 2003). It is with this hybrid nature that most southern NPOs operate.

Southern NPOs advocate by 'lobbying, serving as representatives and advisory experts, conducting research, holding policy influencing conferences, monitoring and exposing the actions (and inactions) of government and the private sector, disseminating information to key constituencies, setting and or defining agendas, developing and promoting codes of conduct, and or organising boycotts' (Hudson, 2002). Their advocacy strategies can be 'distinguished as "insider" strategies aimed at influencing decision-makers directly and "outsider" strategies intended to mobilise public opinion' (Peterson, 1992).

As insiders, they work within the 'frameworks of powerful institutions as entities granted official status or as "partners" with key decision-makers' (Brinkerhoff, 2002). As outsiders, they 'challenge these institutions' existence or limit their impact by, for example, appealing to the court of public opinion' (Florini, 2003).

According to Barrow and Jennings (2001), although the advocacy efforts of NPOs are much more widely visible, some of the most 'essential value created by them stems from their operational activities'. Southern NPOs are well known for stepping in to serve as 'critical safety nets [by] filling voids generated where markets fail, where politically challenged, indebted, or corrupt states are unable or unwilling to provide for unmet needs and where global problems defy neat nation-state responsibilities' (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2002).

Southern NPOs thus usually become adept at providing certain goods and services due to the technical expertise gained from working in difficult settings and/or with underserved populations. Given this expertise and the subsequent trusted position, they are often 'best suited to provide high-quality services at low cost to these communities' (Leonard, 2002). This proximity to local clients affords these NPOs the opportunity 'to expand the range and mix of offerings to a diverse public beyond standard service packages' proffered by the private and governmental sectors (Brinkerhoff, Smith & Teegan, 2003).

Southern NPOs contribute to building or rebuilding social capacity which typically involves the 'shaping of policy; providing training, resource access, and know-how on service delivery; sharing best practices; and creating and supporting institutional development that promotes social welfare' (Brown & Kalegaonkar, 2002). These southern NPOs' capability to continue to relevantly contribute to these development activities and improve on their influencer capabilities is very much affected by, and dependent on, their effectiveness as an organisation.

A final key characteristic of southern NPOs is that they operate in a society that has become largely driven by access to information and knowledge – in an age termed 'the information society' in the 21st century. These southern NPOs, like their other counterparts in society (government and the private sector), find themselves increasingly responding to the driving need for up-to-date and relevant information by the constituencies they serve.

These constituencies, unlike before, due to ever improving technologies have an increased and direct access to information and knowledge on an ever widening range of issues – social, political or otherwise. This in itself creates a greater demand on their ability to share and effectively utilise information as they deliver on their social change objectives.

1.5. NPOs and organisational effectiveness

Understanding and assessing any NPOs' effectiveness is predicated upon a range of issues. Arguments exist that what determines an NPO's effectiveness is the extent to which it is achieving its organisational mission. Others say that an NPO's effectiveness should be determined by its rapid growth by tracking increase in revenue and funding versus those who are running a deficit and have had to cut back. Contention exists, though, when the question is asked, 'if an organisation's revenue is increasing and it's growing rapidly but not achieving its missions and goals, is it still deemed effective?' On the other hand, it is often also technically difficult to assess the extent to which an NPO's mission is being accomplished in relation to the extent of the issue being addressed and its prevalence in the society.

In a majority of cases, the effectiveness of southern NPOs is influenced by funding and/or manpower, though, as indicated above, these are not the only influencing factors. Southern NPOs regularly engage in what is termed 'cross subsidisation' (Patel, 1998) to address a range of issues from designing information systems and flows, enhancing people's capacity to deliver on the goals of the organisation, improving systems and procedures for operational activity, and increasing capacity to raise funds; all of which relate to organisational effectiveness. This trend of cross subsidisation also occurs between NPOs (North-North, South-South, South-North); between NPOs and the private sector and/or government in relation to the technology, people capacity and information and knowledge flow. These have, over the past decade and a half, seen the value in doing projects jointly by pooling their skills and expertise to implement their organisational mandate.

Another factor that influences the effectiveness of southern NPOs is the capacity of its people (usually a combination of core staff and a pool of volunteers and part-time paid labour). The leadership of such NPOs must continuously deal with the high turnover of its skilled labour as well as unreliability in performance and the enthusiasm of its volunteer force. There is also the growing trend of sharing administrative personnel,

and in some cases, an outsourcing of functions, such as accounting, to sharing office costs to reduce overheads.

Dabbs (1991) suggests that, ‘generally, wealth-creating businesses monitor and control their activities by the three Es - efficiency, effectiveness and economy - with efficiency being the main element’.

He defines efficiency as ‘the relationship of inputs to outputs, which usually generates profits’ while in the non-profit sector, effectiveness, perceived as the extent to which objectives are achieved, is of more importance. Though success or failure in the not-for-profit organisation is not so clearly measured as it is in private enterprises’ financial results, NPOs have the same responsibility to effectively serve the consumers of its products and services. Thus a defined management approach and Knowledge management practices are necessary to achieve effectiveness, and are the direct concern this research.

1.5.1 Three networked southern NPOs

These NPO networks have been chosen as they reflect the characteristics of not just a networked southern NPO but are also widely known as sector leaders in their area of service and within their respective locales. Each case study has either a global, sub-regional or a national reach within which their target communities exist. They each have similarities in the way they are formed, organised and managed.

These NPO networks were formed to strengthen the individual member organisation’s voice and capacity to fulfil its mission of either advocacy and/or service delivery. They are all located in the global south, specifically operating out of the African region, with each having a different mandate but with the common denominator of being a network-type NPO. That is, being one of a number of NPOs with similar mandates coming together to work as a collective to achieve a broader and deeper mandate. All three NPOs also rely heavily on the use of Internet-based technologies, amongst others, for

the day-to-day management of the organisation and the implementation of their mandate.

1.5.1.1 The Association for Progressive Communications

The Association for Progressive Communications (APC), is a not for profit international network of civil society organisations operating since the ‘90s. It is dedicated to empowering and supporting groups and individuals working for peace, human rights, development and protection of the environment, through the strategic use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), including the Internet (APC website, 2006). Its programmes are carried out within three broad areas of policy, strategic uses, and women’s networking support programmes. Within each of these broad areas the APC is involved with a much knowledge production via policy briefs, issue papers, research and training manuals.

A council, consisting of appointed representatives drawn from network member organisations, governs the APC and sets its strategic priority areas every four years. This council in turn elects an eight person Executive Board (EB) that works directly with staff members to produce action plans and monitor its implementation. The core team of staff, the EB and programme/project-based working groups, all living and working in different countries, then develop, run, implement and manage the programmes and projects of the APC from day to day.

It implements its activities via a multi-part team made up of EB members, staff and project members (each of these interchanging roles and some voluntary) reducing the lines and structures of traditional management and making leadership accessible to all recipients and members of the community.

1.5.1.2 SANGONet

SANGONet, founded in 1987, has as it mission ‘facilitating access, sharing information, building capacity, raising awareness, enhancing reach and impact, and linking people and organisations through the use of ICTs in Southern Africa’. Over the past 20 years, it has developed into a dynamic civil society organisation with a history closely linked to

the social and political changes experienced by South Africa during its transition to democracy.

SANGONet's ICT services and interventions continue to be shaped by the goal of strengthening the capacity of NGOs in finding long-term and sustainable solutions in response to Southern Africa's development problems. As a non-profit organisation, SANGONet has no shareholders and its Board of Directors is the highest governing structure. Board meetings are held three times per year. Board members represent expertise in a wide range of areas of key importance to the strategic focus and direction of SANGONet, including finance, business, leadership, governance and IT.

SANGONet staff publishes content, organise the annual SANGONet conference, validate entries in its directories, and provide technical support to southern African NGOs while engaging in various other organisational activities.

1.5.1.3 Women'sNet

Women'sNet is a feminist organisation that works to advance gender equality and justice in South Africa using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). They offer training and facilitate content dissemination and creation that supports women, girls, and related gender organisations and networks to take control of their own content and ICT use. The website (www.womensnet.org.sa) is a hub for information by women, about women and gender, and has a focus on South African and African content. They help women to find the people, issues, resources and tools they need for social activism.

CHAPTER 2. TRACING THE LINKS: NETWORKED SOUTHERN NPOs' KM PRACTICES AND ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

2.1. Introduction

To establish a solid foundational framework for this study, an in-depth exploration is given in this chapter on the theories that exist on organisational effectiveness, knowledge management and the NPO sector. The field of knowledge management (KM) and its links to the effectiveness of an NPO operating with and using 21st century technologies is also discussed.

2.2. Theoretical perspectives on organisational effectiveness

Drucker (1974; 1992) says that 'efficiency is concerned with doing things right; while effectiveness is doing the right things.' He argues that 'effectiveness reveals itself as crucial to man's development, to organisation development and to the fulfilment and viability of modern society.' To attain the goal of continuing development either as an individual, an organisation or a society, effectiveness (doing the 'right things') in action, delivery and management is important.

The first theoretical perspective on organisational effectiveness relevant to this research on networked southern NPOs is the multiple constituency model, which recognises that 'an organisation comprises multiple stakeholders or constituents who are likely to use different criteria to evaluate its effectiveness' (Sammuto, 1984). This model postulates that differing groups of stakeholders from clients to staff, to volunteers and funders, all have different perspectives and interpretational approaches to achieving the organisational goal. It is key to recognise the differences in their interests/approaches and perspectives. Given the overall nature of NPOs, this multiple

constituency model is an important part of the approach taken to understand the effectiveness networked southern NPOs.

The social constructivist theory treats organisational effectiveness as 'stakeholder judgments formed in an ongoing process of sense making and implicit negotiation'. Although multiple constituency models share with social constructionism an emphasis on effectiveness as judgments by stakeholders, multiple constituency models treat stakeholder goals (effectiveness criteria) as rationally predictable and somewhat stable, and as being influenced by processes (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

Herman and Renz (1998) describe NPO effectiveness assessment using the parable of the blind man and the elephant. As one man touches the elephant's tail and declares that the elephant is like a rope; another touches the back and concludes that the animal is something big and bristly. This analogy implies that 'effectiveness is a real thing that may be perceived in partial and thus different ways'. The social constructivist view on organisational effectiveness, however, says there is no elephant at all. Rather, different people look for different things and what they 'see' is determined by a social process.

A third theory on organisational effectiveness, i.e. institutional theory, predicts that when there is high uncertainty about the technology for achieving specific outcomes or when outcomes are difficult to measure, organisations are likely to emphasise approved procedures to achieve or maintain their legitimacy (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Helms (2001) identified four key models of organisational effectiveness. The first model measures organisational effectiveness in terms of production, commitment, leadership, and interpersonal conflict. Production was established as the flow of output from the organisation; commitment as a component to measure the degree of attachment to the organisation; leadership as the degree of influence and personal ability, and interpersonal conflict relates to the degree of perceived misunderstanding

between supervisors and subordinates.

The second organisational effectiveness model was developed based on inter-related organisational processes. This model utilises organisational survival and maximising returns as key variables of effectiveness, along with self-regulation. A third model is the competing value framework (CVF).

The CVF was developed initially from research conducted on the statistical analyses of effectiveness indicators within organisations (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). The fourth model outlines indicators of organisational effectiveness, including management experience, organisational structure, political impact, and knowledge management. This study focuses on the knowledge management indicator.

Finally, Butler (1991) argues that organisations are constrained by their environments and set the criteria for effectiveness via 'performance norms' under-pinned by essential values. In any given organisation there will be multiple notions of effectiveness, which are mostly hidden within the relationships that exist in the internal workings of such an organisations (Pedler & Aspinall, 1996). Even though there may be competing or contradictory norms, management has the crucial task of translating these norms into an 'internal ideology' which provides the foundations for decision-making, process setting, and knowledge management, thus influencing such an organisation's effectiveness.

2.3. NPOs' approach to organisational effectiveness

The NPO sector consistently changes in dramatic, complex, and dynamic ways, demanding that they continually reconsider what it is that they do and how they do it – thus influencing how KM takes place, and this in turn continues to influence their effectiveness as an organisation. According to Seashore (1983), three distinctive approaches can be identified to develop measures of organisational effectiveness; namely the 'natural systems approach', the 'goal approach', and the 'decision process

approach'.

The natural systems approach is 'concerned with system boundaries, differentiation and integration of the subsystems that are 'parts' of the focal system, input-transformation-output processes, boundary transactions and system maintenance processes' (Seashore, 1983). Therefore, the effectiveness of an organisation is determined by its ability to acquire the necessary resources from its environment in order to sustain its functioning. This organisational effectiveness model can easily be applied to non-profit organisations because they substantially depend on outside sources of funding, voluntarism, and the like.

Accordingly, these organisations are effective to the extent they have competed successfully for the resources needed to deliver services to their designated 'clients'. However, an organisation may be able to obtain resources needed to maintain its existence without necessarily meeting its mission or objectives; thus this model may not adequately enhance the purposes for which an organisation was established.

The goal approach, however, addresses an organisation's purpose, and effectiveness is measured by the degree of goal attainment (Denison, 1990). Although the definition is clear-cut, it is rather problematic in practice to assess effectiveness with respect to organisational objectives because organisational goals are often complex, incommensurable, or even conflicting (Hall, 1991). Even if one finds the goals of non-profit organisations explicitly defined, the objectives of specific programmes and services may not be explicitly determined or even aligned with the mission. However, according to the goal model, organisational effectiveness is measured by the extent to which a non-profit organisation meets the needs of the population it serves, and the quality and sustainability of the services needed to the clients.

The third approach to organisational effectiveness, called the 'decision process approach', focuses on the processes used by non-profit organisations to achieve their purpose, thus emphasising internal governance processes (Denison, 1990). According

to Seashore (1983), an effective organisation is thus ‘one that optimises the processes for getting, storing, retrieving, allocating, manipulating, interpreting, and discarding information’. Thus, if processes are performed well, then they result in overall organisational effectiveness. The departure point for this research is to know which processes and practices characterise an effective non-profit organisation.

Green and Griesinger’s (1996) extensive research on measurements of organisational effectiveness identifies six key areas influencing NPOs’ organisational effectiveness. These include fundraising, mission and policy (programmes and services), financial management, governance, human resources management, and public or constituency communication. This research is focused on an adaptation of the last four areas from a knowledge management perspective (specifically people capacity, systems and procedures, information and knowledge flows, and relationships with stakeholders).

2.4. Information and communications technologies for development

Development as a term refers to a variety of ideas and beliefs premised on the fact that some parts of the world are developed while others are not, and thus the latter need to achieve ‘development’. The post World War II era has witnessed a range of development theories from those rooted in capitalist ideology to Marxist ideology; some approaches promoting state-led development and others market-led development (Mathews, 2004).

Proponents of development as an economic include Rosenstein-Rodan (1902-1985) and the neo-classical development theorists, Bhagwati and Krueger (1995). They view economic development ‘as a growth process that requires the systematic reallocation of factors of production from a low-productivity, traditional technology, decreasing returns, mostly primary sector to a high-productivity, modern, increasing returns, mostly industrial sector’ (Adelman & Morris, 1988). They speak of development as that pertaining to wealth, infrastructure, comforts, conveniences, technology, and resources

possessed and not balanced out by their social dimensions.

Development in its simplest form is a process. 'It is the upward directional movement of society from lesser to greater levels of energy, efficiency, quality, productivity, complexity, comprehension, creativity, enjoyment and accomplishment which all go to achieve development' (Asokan, 1997). This upward directional movement of society is at the core of the mission of a majority of NPOs – in particular those based in the global south in what are termed the 'developing' nations of the world.

Aspects of society (the public, private and civil parts), in their pursuit of social and economic development, have sought to identify mediums or platforms with which they can reach their particular goals. To foster the continuing upward growth of development, factors such as technological innovation, global affirmation of the individual, the rights of the common man, the accumulation and codification of knowledge in all fields, and the accelerating pace of creativity and innovation have all come together.

Historically, technology, in whichever form (as it relates to industry or even the discovery of fire), has changed human societies by its use and diffusion and has evolved due to social conditions and vice versa. In the 21st century, new technologies increasingly render information barriers either ineffective or economically unsound. Modern communications technologies have made it possible to ignore borders and to create communities based on common values and objectives (on a grassroots or trans-national level) that were once practically the exclusive purview of nationalism. In the last 15-20 years the Internet (a global collection of interlinked computers, working together interchanging data by packet switching using the standardised Internet Protocol (IP) Suite) by blurring traditional boundaries, has emerged as an enabler for development goals.

This multi-billion dollar network is a direct outcome of strategically motivated military research begun in the 1960s with U.S. federal sponsorship. A fertile mixture of 'high-

risk ideas, stable research funding, visionary leadership, extraordinary grass-roots cooperation, and vigorous entrepreneurship' (Cerf, n.d.) has led to a Global Information Society linking people, ideas, and information beyond all physical boundaries, and creating an environment filled with constantly innovate technologies which, where well utilised, continue to revolutionise the way society at large interacts and develops. Bach and Stark (2004) capture the essence of a component of the Internet, the World Wide Web, with their emphasis on its capacity to 'link, search [and] interact'.

The emergence of the Internet as a platform for varied applications and components as a worldwide system of communication, information exchange, education and commerce has opened up vast opportunities for even more rapid development. It is eliminating barriers to communication imposed by space and time, it is levelling the playing field between rich and poor, and it is making possible universal access to information and services at very low cost.

The importance of the Internet - the most relevant technology of the 21st century - in helping development processes cannot be over stated. This first became apparent in 1985 when the Maitland Commission presented the Missing Link report, highlighting the significant role of telecommunications in the socio-economic development of every cadre of the world.

Bach and Stark (2004), in identifying the political implications of this multiplicative, interactive technology, suggest that the Internet creates a space for something to happen as well as a space within which something happens, including social bonds and new forms of organisation management. They clearly state that it is ideal for lowering costs, increasing participation, and impacting on and streamlining operations in a wider context – it is ideal for achieving the goal of organisational effectiveness.

In this information age, attaining organisational effectiveness is closely related with an organisations' ability to use information timely, accurately and relevantly in any process. To this effect, organisations employ information and communications

technologies like the Internet, VOIP, Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems and Intranets, amongst a whole range of other applications and software, to solve organisational problems of information access and integration and manage organisational knowledge, thereby directly improving organisational effectiveness (Skratulja, 2003).

2.5. Knowledge management and organisational effectiveness

An important foundation for effectiveness within any organisation is the will to manage what constitutes relevant knowledge. The organisation has to first determine what constitutes relevant knowledge. This is, however, contingent on the industry, the organisation, the people, the time, and the competitive environment. Knowledge management for any organisational type should cut across internal and external borders such as those between departments, organisations or countries.

It is important to note that for this research, knowledge management is rightly perceived as a process, rather than an organisational system or a piece(s) of technology used to manage the storage of data and information. A definition of information and knowledge is given in the next section to aid in the understanding of the concept of knowledge management.

2.5.1 Understanding the concept of knowledge

To understand the nature of knowledge in any organisation, it is important to first differentiate between information and knowledge. There is extensive literature on defining what knowledge is, with a focus on two themes: the distinction between information and knowledge; and the nature of human knowledge. Numerous definitions of information exist with the central theme that there is some form of progression, beginning with raw data being transformed into information (information is

data with context), processed and then resulting in knowledge. With some authors this progression continues to include some or all of the following; experience, intelligence, understanding and wisdom.

A working definition of knowledge is its ‘capacity to act effectively, with the view that this as an attribute of people, with currently only few exceptions in narrow domains’ (Dawson, 2000a). In contrast, information is defined as ‘anything, which is or can be digitised’ (Shapiro & Varian 1998). These two concepts are linked through the processes of internalisation of information and its transformation into personal knowledge, and then the externalisation of personal knowledge into information in the public domain (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Haeckel's hierarchy (Haeckel & Nolan, 1993) is an information hierarchy which progresses from data to information, becomes intelligence (that of making inferences from information), is processed, and then becomes knowledge which overtime is then translated as wisdom. Knowledge, Haeckel (1993) says, is ‘subjective intelligence with certitude’. In contrast, Ackoff (1986) approaches the debate from a ‘question-answering’ standpoint. He concurs with the views that data are facts and observations, and that information is data in context, being the answers to description questions ('What?' 'Where?' and 'How many'). Knowledge, for Ackoff (1986), is then ‘information with meaning, but meaning with an application orientation; while understanding is also knowledge but with insight’. Knowledge can therefore be said to reside in people, although they may not necessarily be able to explain it, or even be conscious of it, partly as people can know far more than they can communicate to others (Polanyi, 1967).

This distinction between information and knowledge helps to clarify the difference between information management and knowledge management. Information management is confined to the management of digitised or manually stored information, and thus is a subset of knowledge management, which deals with the larger concept of how people in organisations are enabled in performing knowledge-

based functions. This includes providing efficient and effective interfaces with repositories of digital information. However, it ultimately encompasses almost all aspects of management. In the same way, information capabilities are a subset of knowledge capabilities, so when knowledge capabilities are referred to they encompasses both the organisation's capabilities in dealing with digital information as well as the broader organisational capabilities which are enabled by them.

Knowledge created in a development context - through organisational staff, community network members or through work done by other organisations - is a valuable commodity and needs to be effectively managed and preserved. This knowledge is valuable in that it essentially is the foundation on which the development of such a society is built and which, in most cases, also influences government policy and private sector practices in the long- or short-term. This is an integral part of the effectiveness of any organisation - and in particular for the non-profit sector with a high turnover of staff members with requisite skills.

For many years, and to a great extent still today, an organisation was understood as the 'rational coordination of activities of a set of people who have a common explicit goal, through the division of work and function, and a hierarchy of control and authority' (Schein, 1965, as quoted in Weick, 1973). Organisational theorists such as Karl Weick took a radically different approach, teaching one to see organisations as dynamic systems, analysed in terms of behaviour, processes, and the interactions between actors (Weick, 1973).

Senge (1990) defines a learning organisation as 'a particular vision of an enterprise that has the capacity to continually enhance its capabilities to shape its future'. Tacit knowledge is transferred from one individual to another and from individuals to groups and teams through conversations, dialogues and via meetings.

Explicit knowledge, on the other hand, is knowledge that has been articulated, coded in a recognisable format (by the team or organisation) and recorded (which in the last

decade has been through technological platforms created for the specific purpose of capturing or facilitating knowledge creation and sharing).

Argyris (2000) and Senge (1990) indicate that organisational learning interventions seek to increase professional effectiveness within the organisation by providing tools to enable people to reflect periodically on their behaviour. In this way organisation members analyse what Argyris (2000) terms their 'theories in action; their assumptions and intentions, strategies and results, and, above all, the deepest held values and beliefs that govern their behaviour'.

There are only a few publicly accessible publications on the actual experiences of applying organisational learning in the NPO sector. On the one hand, the great majority of case studies that are used to illustrate the work of Argyris (2000), Senge (1990) and other theorists refer to large private corporations from the northern hemisphere and, to a lesser degree, to public sector bodies. On the other hand, as noted by Edwards (1997), there is a small but growing volume of non-profit related literature addressing the process of learning and its results. One reason for this lack of material is the fact that, despite existing for many years, 'it has only been since the 1990s that the third sector has been regarded as a strategic area for the harmonious development of modern society' (Merege, 2000).

2.5.2 Perspectives on KM

Human / organisational development theories are based on the idea that each worker has a certain set of knowledge, and the organisation is established and optimised to use that knowledge (Camp, 2005). Knowledge management (KM), according to Wiig (1995) (credited with coining the term), 'is the systematic, explicit, and deliberate building, renewal and application of knowledge to maximise an enterprise's knowledge related effectiveness and returns from its knowledge assets.'

Thus an organisation can only be as effective as its people's capacity to create,

manage and utilise the information and knowledge generated to achieve a goal. Senge (1990) indicates that organisations need to engage in 'generative' learning that leads to the creation of knowledge. Though KM is an evolving discipline, the need for knowledge management in a non-profit context has become more apparent over the past decade with more NPO type organisations taking up KM practices from different perspectives. In whichever sector, though, KM is concerned with tacit organisational knowledge and various non-typical information resources of value to users, such as the organisation's hierarchy and stakeholders.

As knowledge increasingly becomes the key strategic resource of the future, the need to develop a comprehensive understanding of knowledge processes for the creation, transfer and deployment of this unique asset is becoming critical. Knowledge management processes follow best practice procedures and benchmarking when a range of collaborating organisations use them. Facing the challenges of a globally expanding and highly competitive knowledge-based economy, the traditional organisations are urgently seeking the fundamental insights to help them nurture, harvest and manage the immense potential of their knowledge assets to provide the capability to excel at the leading edge of innovation (Shariq, 1997).

Beijerse (1999) says organisations increasingly have to deal with such matters as an 'increase in the complexity of products and processes {sic} results in a growing reservoir of relevant knowledge and increasing competition in an economy with shorter product life cycles (in which case learning processes have to be faster and quicker than ever before)'. He also indicates that as result of this there is 'an increased focus on the core competencies of the organisation with a shedding of tasks perceived as less relevant'.

What happens in trans-organisational knowledge management (as is the case in the three NPOs being studied) is the systematic sharing and exchange of knowledge with not only internal but also external entities. Expanding the scope of knowledge management beyond the single organisation focuses attention on 'intelligent trans-

organisational knowledge interfaces, the points at which the knowledge management structures of different organisations overlap. Those interfaces act as filters for the sharing and exchange of knowledge across organisational boundaries' (Carayannis, 2000).

Effective knowledge management plays a significant role in securing the cooperation of all parties in NPO networks while serving as the foundation for the development of trust, which in turn leads to successful cooperative relationships.

Onge (1999) argues that knowledge management is 'about the development of organisational capability, which is essential if an organisation is to develop and lead its market rather than endlessly work to keep up with the demand'. Such capability entails the integration of the goals of the organisation and the ways it seeks to serve (its strategy); the grouping of accountabilities as structures that define the position of the relationship between members of the organisation; its systems, in particular the ways in which processes for information, communication, and decision making proceed. Finally its culture, which is the combined sum of the individual opinions, shared mindsets, values and norms.

Swan (2000) builds on this to argue that there are three modes of knowledge development. The first is knowledge developed and created through joint activities involved with solving problems (generative); second is knowledge developed and accumulated through the creation of products and services (productive and can be applied repeatedly but within a different guise); and third, knowledge made available to external stakeholders such as the wider recipient community. Knowledge developed from all three though has the same enablers and barriers when it comes to managing such knowledge.

2.5.2.1 Enablers and barriers to knowledge management

There are many enablers and barriers to the process of knowledge management. The

lack of clearly agreed goals, an inadequate budget, unmotivated and unskilled or untrained personnel, and a lack of clearly defined systems and procedures will detract from a knowledge management project's effectiveness. Three very important factors which can act as enablers, and which if badly managed can be monumental barriers to knowledge management in any organisation, are trust, organisational culture and the relationship between top down strategy and bottom up organisational learning, as explained by Senge (1990).

Hendriks (2000) identifies knowledge processes within an organisation as specifically needing a different consideration from the organisation's other business processes, especially where information technology (IT) support is concerned. It is important to reemphasise that knowledge management should be viewed as a process, rather than as an object or technology system, and that the technological factors should always take third place to human and organisational systems (Davenport & Prusak, 1998).

2.6. The Internet, NPO networks and knowledge management

Since the public emergence and adoption of the Internet in the '80s and '90s there has been a further diffusion and convergence of technologies (such as mobile, television, radio etc.) that has facilitated quantum leaps in the management of information and knowledge. More and more technological applications, based on the Internet, are being viewed as enablers to achieve the vision, objectives and goals of any organisation, rather than as an expensive investment in technology and a wide range of specialists.

The Internet has been shown to facilitate activities which are important for knowledge creation, transfer and sharing, such as data and information capturing; sharing of such data and information and their transformation into knowledge and best practices; mapping networks of experts and embedding knowledge in products, processes and people.

The universal adoption of the Internet has created the opportunity for firms and other organisations to establish collaborative networks of partners with whom they may exchange strategic knowledge in order to achieve mutually beneficial objectives. This electronic commerce knowledge can be termed e-knowledge. E-knowledge networks combine the positive benefits of knowledge management systems with those of inter-organisational systems (Warkentin, Bapna & Sugumaran, 2001). This has formed a part of the wider Information Society that has grown since the beginning of the 21st century.

2.7. The information society

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) was held in two phases in Geneva, 10-12 December 2003 and in Tunis, 16-18 November 2005. It was preceded by 'a decade of preparations, policy declarations by national governments and international organisations which culminated in the confirmation of the profound importance and significance of electronic information networks to 21st century economies and societies (Melody, Currie & Kane, 2003). The information society is characterised by the ever-increasing use of technological tools for accessing and communicating information and knowledge across boundaries (social geographical, political etc). It is described in the WSIS Declaration of Principles as 'people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented' (WSIS, 2003).

The ideal information society is where 'everyone can create, access, utilise and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life' (WSIS 203).

This in practice, as discussed by Melody *et al*. means that the information society evolves with the continuous development and application of new technologies and electronic communication services that make advanced and basic information exchanges possible at all times for all users of such technologies, in particular the

Internet platform. It should be noted that in reality the information society is as yet far from this ideal. The South African White Paper on Science and Technology, written almost a decade before the final WSIS, captures the impact that enhanced access to information and the evolution of new ICTs can have on society at large:

> *'The world is in the throes of a revolution that will change forever the way we live, work, play, organise our societies and ultimately define ourselves... the ability to maximise the use of information is now considered to be the single most important factor in deciding the competitiveness [effectiveness] of [organisations, NPOS) as well as their ability to empower their [constituents] through enhanced access to information.' (DACST, 1996 as cited in Gray, 2009).*

This ever-increasing access to information directly impacts on the ability of organisations to be efficient and effective when and where they are appropriately utilised to achieve organisational goals; be they to create social change or for direct economic empowerment. The last decade in particular has seen a series of evolutions and changes in the way different types of organisations exist, operate and deliver on their set goals; be they within the public or private sphere. This research focuses on one such response – networked southern NPOs and how they leverage ICTs and the information society to achieve their social change goals.

2.8. Networked NPOs

It is important to clarify the concept of a 'network' in relation to the NPO sector. An NPO network is an environment for interaction and activities such as joint projects, collaborations or alliances for a specific advocacy or operational issue, and may benefit the participants in various degrees. Continuous innovation in such networks is achieved via the linkage of external and internal knowledge. Although the organisation obtains the innovation resources from both organisational forms at different times, the flow of the resources and the accumulated knowledge base are inter-dependent and

correlated with other subsidiaries and network members from outside (Szeto, 2000).

A network usually has members at several levels within the organisation performing and controlling specific activities, and forming and developing relationships with relevant stakeholders (ideally). They have two key types of activity cycles characterised by transformational activities where resources are changed, and activities are transferred to give more control of resources from one action to another. These activities, in turn, link all stakeholders within such a network though there will be active and passive members all combining, sharing and utilising resources (financial, human and structural).

Stakeholders in these networks create and maintain relationships with each other and require knowledge of other actors within the network in order to do so. These stakeholders are the key constituents in strengthening and enabling negotiation, coordination and compatibility in order to facilitate collective and purposeful action towards fulfilling an agreed upon goal.

Activities are the processes in which actors coordinate the utilisation of resources. A cyclical relationship links these three factors of the network (Swan, 2000).

2.8.1 NPOs and decentralisation

The form and work of networked southern NPOs challenge them to adopt a decentralised structure. One knows little, however, about bow this decentralisation is organised, and even less about its impacts on the performance of such NPOs.

At some stage in their growth or work, most international NPOs are confronted with the question of whether they should adopt a decentralised organisational structure. Currently, there is little literature and even less comparative evidence on how NPOs go about making such decisions, or on the way that their performance is affected by the choices they make. Furthermore, ‘the few studies of international NPOs that do

concentrate on organisational issues curiously do not address decentralisation as a key variable‘ (Butler & Wilson, 1990).

'Decentralisation' is a term used loosely to describe a particular type of organisational structure based on where decisions are made in the organisation' (Butler & Wilson, 1990). The ‘clarity’ of this statement obscures the fact that in NPOs - and in other organisations - responsibility for and authority over a particular decision is often split between different staff and organisational levels. In other words, decision-making is not necessarily in one place; it can be diffuse. The degree to which responsibility for and authority on decision-making and its processes are either concentrated at the top or spread downwards defines the extent to which an organisation can be said to be centralised or decentralised.

NPOs are known to decentralise their functions in a myriad of ways (Fowler, 1992). The first of these is limited to the movement of responsibilities downwards or outwards within the organisation, but authority is not changed or affected. This is termed ‘deconcentration’. The second form is more substantial and is termed ‘delegation’. It involves the movement of responsibility and authority to make decisions to lower levels within the organisation (i.e., they exercise authority that is delegated from above and can be withdrawn at any time). The last form of decentralisation, which is of direct relevance to this study, is called ‘devolution’. Responsibilities and associated authority exists, or are transferred, to semi-autonomous organisations which are usually legally separate, and can be within the same geographical location or even beyond the central organisation. This central organisation then serves as the ‘parent body’ and coordination of these disparate, but united, organisations takes place virtually.

2.8.2 Virtual organisations

The workplace is a major part of one’s social fabric, and the capability to exchange information and knowledge rapidly has dramatically changed the power structure in companies, universities, etc. Workers of any status have been able to disseminate

information electronically without having to go through hierarchical channels (Larsen & McInerney, 2002). The virtual community created by these networks of organisations documents everyday life in cyberspace by recounting, recording and rendering the human side of the electronic network. Larsen and McInerney (2002) identify over five characteristics by which virtual organisations can be identified.

First is the ability to customise their products or services to the needs of the customer, thus facilitating resource sharing and knowledge exchange. Another characteristic is that virtual organisations are usually a network of independent organisations linked by 'relational, positional and or spatial proximity'. They are also usually geographically dispersed and are highly reliant on information and communications technologies, with each organisation contributing to the central pool its specific skills and high quality competencies. This cooperation, based on dynamic teamwork, usually results in the creation of unique and innovative solutions to the set goals and objectives (Larsen & McInerney, 2002). The three southern NPO networks earmarked as the case studies of this research exhibit the characteristics of virtual organisations.

Virtual organisational management can thus be said to be the performance of management processes via an electronic medium in order to facilitate an efficient, speedy and transparent process of disseminating information, knowledge, services and project implementation to an identified group of recipients.

The process of management, using electronic platforms such as the Internet, is an emerging trend for an organisation or a network of organisations in its day-to-day management and service delivery. A virtual organisational network then comprises a set of legally independent and/or dependent organisations that share resources and skills to achieve its mission and goal. The interaction among members of the virtual organisation is mainly done through online computer networks. It is the process and management of the interaction and knowledge-sharing and management processes using ICTs that will be explored in this research study.

This transposition of management styles into the 'virtual world' of the Internet potentially represents a reviewing of knowledge management practices and thus influences the effectiveness of such an organisation.

2.9. Knowledge management in the networked southern NPOs

Knowledge management philosophy focuses on managing the balance of people, processes and technology that determines the organisation and its relationship with its environment. Beneath this there are layers of values and attitudes that determine whether the organisation is a knowledge environment. It is about creating an environment where knowledge is valued and where the difference between information and knowledge, and their interdependence, is understood; an environment that values creativity and innovation, encourages a variety of working patterns, and facilitates communication between people in different locations and from different departments.

A knowledge management philosophy creates an organisation that encourages ideas, rewards success, allows people to fail and learn from failure, enables people to admit problems, reflect on and share failure, success, problems and solutions, and encourages people to ask for help. It creates an organisation that is aware of its environment, developing a corporate instinct that allows it to react quickly and make informed decisions (Abell & Oxbrow, 2001).

The factors that influence knowledge management inside the virtual organisation are distinguished in three main disciplines; managerial, resources and environmental (Holsapple & Joshi, 2000). Managerial influences emanate from organisational participants responsible for coordinating the management of knowledge. First is the development of knowledge, a primary driver of KM which without coordination would lead to the non-management of dependencies among activities and a lack of harnessing of the right and sufficient number of skills for executing such activities. The arrangement, timing and integration of knowledge processing within the organisations operations are of great importance. These will be examined in the three case studies.

Next is 'control' which is concerned with 'ensuring that needed knowledge resources and processors are available in sufficient quality and quantity, subject to required security. In establishing sufficient controls to govern the quality of knowledge used in an organisation, management needs to consider two dimensions: knowledge validity and knowledge utility. Validity is concerned with accuracy, consistency and certainty; utility is concerned with clarity, meaning, relevance and importance' (Holsapple & Joshi, 2000).

Holsapple & Joshi (2000) then mention 'measurement', which involves 'the valuation of knowledge resources and processors'. They indicate it is the basis for the 'evaluation of leadership, coordination and control; for identifying and recognising value-adding activities and resources; for assessing and comparing the execution of knowledge activities; and for evaluating the impacts of an organisation's knowledge management on bottom-line performance'.

Lastly, they identify leadership which in 'alignment with the organisation's purpose and strategy, establishes enabling conditions for fruitful knowledge management' (Holsapple & Joshi, 2000). The distinguishing characteristic of leadership is that of being 'a catalyst by inspiring, mentoring, engendering trust and respect, instilling a cohesive and creative culture, listening, learning, teaching and knowledge sharing' (Holsapple & Joshi, 2000). They say that the knowledge management leader 'creates

conditions that allow participants to readily exercise and cultivate their knowledge manipulation skills, to contribute their own individual knowledge resources to the organisation's pool of knowledge, and to have easy access to relevant knowledge resources'. They conclude that 'for ongoing success of knowledge management initiatives, it is necessary to develop leaders at all levels of functionality and or accountability' (Holsapple & Joshi, 2000).

2.10. The nature of knowledge-based networked southern NPOs

Today virtually all NPOs claim in one way or another to be knowledge organisations, in that knowledge is their primary resource and the source of differentiation. This is most obviously true in services and knowledge-based networked southern NPOs. While knowledge is applied in very different ways in each organisation type, the essential knowledge-based processes are the same, meaning that a model of knowledge-based southern NPOs concerned with effectively reaching their goals can be developed which can be applied across a wide variety of similar NPOs.

In the 21st century, the challenges facing NPOs and southern NPOs include, amongst others, loss of organisational knowledge due to high turnover of personnel (paid or voluntary), an undefined approach to engagements with their stakeholders (from staff to service recipient/constituents), and a lack of clearly defined systems and approaches to achieving goals and objectives.

There are three main resource areas that has been identified as influencing the southern NPOs' capability to be effective (Dawson, 2000a). First are the skills and capabilities of the human capital (people capacity in this research) working individually and in teams. Second is the organisational infrastructure and processes (systems and procedures) in place for information and knowledge flow, and third are the relationship capital or stakeholder relationships with stakeholders ranging from partners to network members to regulators and others (Dawson, 2000b). These categories of intellectual

capital comprise the primary resources of knowledge organisations and are key to the carrying out of services, activities and or projects. While financial capital, land and other resources can also be important resources of effectiveness-oriented knowledge organisations, it is the primary resources, which are the intangible ones and are of relevance to this research.

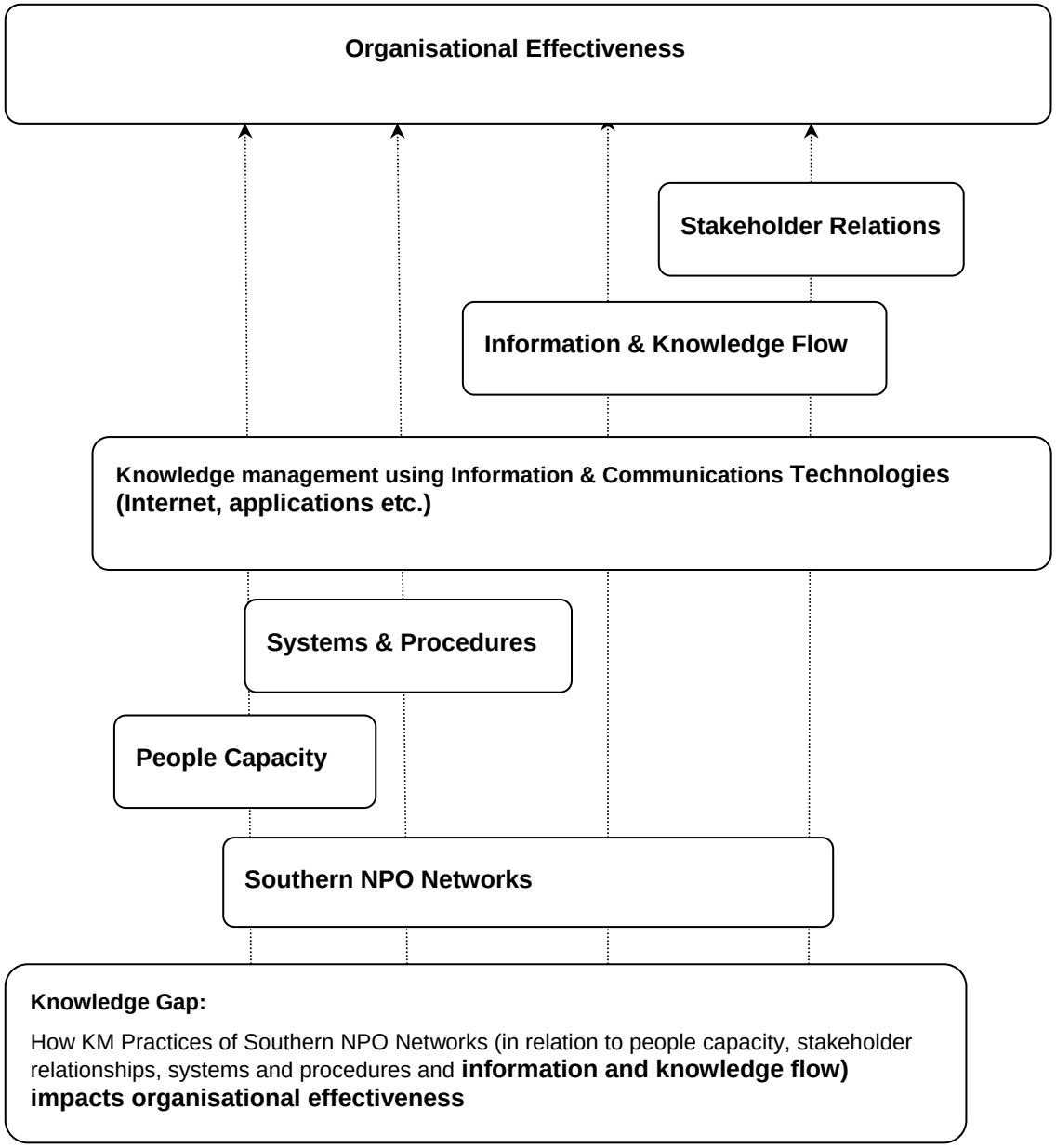

Figure 2.1 Research framework (based on Akinsanmi, 2009)

The framework above builds on the core areas of KM as identified by Wiig (1995). It is an exploration, building on the theories and concepts of knowledge management, NPO networks, ICTs for development and organisational effectiveness and the interactions, inter-relationships with the three resource areas, and the results thereof, which in practice help to achieve effectiveness in the three southern NPO networks, identified.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

3.1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the problem and purpose statements, frames the main research question and sub-questions, and discusses the broad methodological approach, as well as the specific research methods employed in the study.

3.2. Problem statement

In most development organisations there is a continuous shortage of appropriately skilled personnel, systems and procedures, and entrenched information and knowledge flow methodologies which would help them measure and quantify, on an ongoing basis, their achievement of the set organisational goals. Emerging over the last decade is the use of information and communications technologies, in particular the Internet and applications on it, to aid in the achievement of such goals by organisations, including NPOs. This is to enhance their information and knowledge flow, manage systems and procedures, and harness a wider range of staff and volunteer capacity, as well as to engage with external stakeholders to achieve organisational missions.

Many studies in the timeframe 2000-2009 have explored ICT-based knowledge management practices in relation to NPOs, as evidenced in the references used in the literature review; in particular Dawson (2000a), Lettieri *et al*. (2004) and Singh (2008).

The gap in knowledge that currently exists, and which is captured by the conceptual framework for this research, is the knowledge of how the use of such ICT-based knowledge management practices by networked southern NPOs relates to their organisational effectiveness.

Knowledge management is understood to mean a series of processes, rather than just an organisational system or piece(s) of technology used to manage the storage of data and information. Building on the definitions of authors such as Wiig (1995), KM, for the purposes of this research, is defined as the 'systematic knowledge gathering and utilisation practices (formal and informal), which directly and or indirectly impacts on the networked southern non-profit organisations' ability to effectively deliver on its organisational goals' (Akinsanmi, 2010). Organisational effectiveness (OE), within this research, focuses on identifying how each of the case study organisations is able to achieve set goals using KM concepts, implicitly or explicitly, assisted by the use of ICT. This builds from the understanding that OE can be perceived in different ways based on who or what questions are asked, as an organisation consists of multiple stakeholders or constituencies (Herman & Renz, 1998; Sammuto, 1984).

3.3. Purpose statement

This research seeks to understand how networked southern NPOs implement knowledge management concepts utilising ICTs to achieve organisational effectiveness. It looks into and draws on established and emerging theories with respect to non-profit organisations, development sector management, organisational effectiveness and knowledge management, with the aim of identifying the interrelationships among these areas of theory and practice.

It explores how the use of the ICTs, in particular the Internet and related applications, informs and influences the knowledge management practices of southern NPOs. It utilises the case study method to look into the knowledge management practices of three networked southern NPOs in relation to people capacity, systems and

procedures, information and knowledge flows, and relationships with stakeholders. These areas will be examined to determine how they influence the organisation's effectiveness. Based on the findings, specific conclusions are drawn and recommendations made that are applicable to a wider range of southern non-profit organisations.

3.4. Research questions

The main research question is, 'How are the knowledge management practices of networked southern NPOs key to their organisational effectiveness?

In answering this larger question, the following sub-questions are posed in relation to identified KM concepts:

- How is the KM concept of people capacity implemented in networked southern NPOs?

- In which ways do the KM systems and procedures in place impact on the capacity to deliver on the organisational goals of the networked southern NPO?

- By which means is the information and knowledge generated within and beyond the networked southern NPO shared and utilised?

- How do the stakeholder relations of the networked southern NPO influence its effectiveness?

- To what extent do the findings from the above sub-questions influence the effectiveness of networked southern NPOs?

3.5. Qualitative research methodology

Neuman (2000), as earlier discussed, indicates that the 'interpretive approach to research involves the systematic analysis of data through detailed observation of people and their work'. It is this understanding of what interpretive social science is that points one to the use of the qualitative research methodology.

Qualitative research studies focus on understanding and drawing out meaning from people's interactions with the environment in which they live and work. The qualitative research methodology is widely used to examine a particular reality, which in this case is the KM reality within three networked southern NPOs. It is used in this research to gain an understanding of the interactions of KM practices with people capacity in each organisation, the systems and procedures employed, and the procedures and processes that guide information and knowledge flow, including each organisation's relationship with its stakeholders.

The information gathered, analysed and interpreted from these three case studies will then be used to draw specific conclusions that can be further applied or generalised to similar organisations in relatively similar circumstances. Merriam (2002) asserts that the 'key to understanding qualitative research lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world.' It is this interaction, and its interpretation in particular contexts and time frames that researchers seek to understand in qualitative research studies.

This enables them to either present or build a concept, a theory, or to make hypotheses, which can then be further investigated and applied to other studies. In this study, concepts and theories on KM practices are examined within each case study and then analysed to identify how this impacts on their effectiveness.

The qualitative research approach emphasises developing insights and generalisations from the data collected. These data are usually 'soft,' in that they come in the form of

impressions, words, sentences, photos, symbols and the largely subjective personal observations of the researcher. Qualitative research speaks the language of cases and contexts with the emphasis on conducting detailed examinations of cases in 'natural' life and presenting authentic interpretations that are sensitive to specific socio-historical contexts.

The qualitative research methodology is of relevance to this study, due to what Neuman (2000) termed a major characteristic. This characteristic is the possibility presented for capturing and discovering meaning from data that has been captured (in this case) from studying documents and interview transcripts from the three-networked southern NPOs. These are then analysed by extracting themes or generalisations from evidence and organising such data to present a coherent, consistent picture that can be applied across, or in, similar contexts.

There are myriad types of qualitative research methodologies, ranging from the critical and ethnographic approach to the interpretive and post-modern approaches. The language of qualitative research is one of interpretation; cases in their social contexts and development of grounded theories that emphasise tracing the process and sequence of events in specific settings.

For the purposes of this study, an interpretive case study approach will be used, while data analysis relies on the use of coding methodology from grounded theory. In this study, insights into the KM practices of the three networked southern NPOs for managing knowledge in varied organisational sectors, projects, programme and or activities are identified and analysed. This is done via detailed documentary forays into the existing body of knowledge and through in-depth interviews with people within the organisation. Each case study includes interviews with people across the organisation, an evaluation of process as it pertains to information and knowledge flow, and the examination of systems and procedures that have been put in place.

These are analysed in context to identify how they impact on the projects, programmes

and/or activities and overall organisational effectiveness.

3.6. Interpretive social science

Interpretive social science can be traced to German sociologist, Max Weber (1864-1920), and philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911). Dilthey, in his 'Introduction to Human Sciences' (1883), argues that there are two different types of sciences; the first rooted in an emphatic understanding of the everyday life experiences of people in specific contexts, and the other based on abstract explanation. The interpretative approach to research is 'the systematic analysis of socially meaningful action through the direct observation of people (and their work) in natural settings in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people create and maintain their social worlds' (Neuman, 2000).

Interpretative social science is thus closely associated with the theory of meaning, or hermeneutics, discussed below with its emphasis on a detailed reading or examination of 'text' in its expanded form. The place of interpretative analysis cannot be over-emphasised when the goal is to have an understanding of how NPOs activities interact with their goals of knowledge management and organisational effectiveness.

An interpretative approach is applied to this study to systematically gather data on, and analyse, the KM practices used for the in- and out-flow of information and knowledge. It examines their people capacity, including skills and knowledge development, its transfer and exchange within the organisation, how it shapes their systems and procedures and ultimately influences their relationships with varied stakeholders. It the looks at how these contribute to their effectiveness as a networked southern NPO with a role in social change. The use of this hermeneutically grounded interpretive approach, with an emphasis on drawing meaning within contexts, then enables the use and application of the conclusions drawn from study to NPOs with similar characteristics, practices and operating in similar contexts.

In view of the extensive nature of this study of knowledge management practices within these three similar but conceptually different southern NPOs, an understanding of the concept of interpretive social science helps to make a case for the adoption of the qualitative research approach.

3.7. Hermeneutics: the theory of meaning

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) is touted as the 'father of modern hermeneutics', with his proposition of hermeneutics as a general theory of textual interpretation and understanding. Hermeneutic interpretation is an iterative process, which goes through a number of iterations corresponding to the different levels at which the overall context is progressively defined. It involves an in-depth understanding of the context of that which is being researched for purposes of understanding the 'texts'. The context of this research is networked southern NPO networks that actively engage in using knowledge management practices to achieve their organisational effectiveness goals.

Contemporary hermeneutic thought has expanded the meaning of the term 'text' to include organisational practices and institutions, economic and social structures, culture and other textual forms (Ricoeur, 1990). This interpretation is metaphorical in nature, 'They are texts because they may be 'read,' understood and interpreted in a manner that is similar to our reading, understanding, and interpretation of written texts' (Francis, 1994). As a result, the methodological applicability of hermeneutics in organisational research stands considerably expanded (Prasad, 2002). Several theorists and thinkers, including Schleiermacher, have further contributed to the development of the 'theory, epistemology and philosophy' of hermeneutics across a range of dimensions (Prasad, 2002) spanning three categories; namely classical hermeneutic theory, philosophical hermeneutics, and critical hermeneutics. Of relevance to this research is critical hermeneutics – applied not just to textual data but also to actual processes, people and activities, and viewed as a 'constructive enterprise directed at developing a more complete form of hermeneutics' (Prasad, 2002).

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) performed an extensive examination of the use of the term 'hermeneutics' by researchers in management sub-disciplines. They concluded that 'an examination of this body of research shows that, in general, management scholars have tended to employ the term hermeneutics in two broad senses', which they refer to as the 'weak' and the 'strong' sense.

In its 'strong' sense within management research, the term hermeneutics refers to 'research that engages in interpreting texts (and other organisational artefacts and activities) and, for purposes of such interpretation, closely relies on the epistemological and philosophical insights and guidelines offered by critical hermeneutics' (Prasad, 2002). It is the strong sense of hermeneutic usage that is adopted in this research. In methodological terms, therefore, the hermeneutic approach offers this management research considerable flexibility for combining varied research methods in the interpretation of data.

3.8. Research design: case study methodology

Case studies 'explore single entities bounded by time and activity and collect detailed information by using a variety of collection procedures during a sustained period of time' (Creswell, 1994). It is used to shed light on a phenomenon; in this case the knowledge management practices of networked southern NPOs, with the aim of examining current practices and postulating a theory and recommendations on the interdependencies of KM practices in networked southern NPOs and the effectiveness of such organisations.

Yin (1994) defines a case study as 'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.'

It relies on multiple sources of evidence, requiring data to converge in a triangulated fashion. In practice, case studies encourage and facilitate theoretical innovation and

generalisation (Feagin, Orum & Sjoberg, 1991). In this study this involves gathering data on people capacity, information and knowledge flow, systems and procedures, and stakeholder relationships. Data were also collected on technologies in use, including information on how they are used. It examines if there exist any links (intended or not) between the effectiveness of networked southern NPOs and the use of the KM practices identified.

Yin (1994) goes further to say that gathering evidence for a case study often involves techniques used by historians but can also utilise direct observation and systematic interviewing as additional sources of evidence. This research aims to achieve what Yin (1994) describes as 'analytical generalisation' on KM practices of networked southern NPOs. Analytical, because this level of generalisation is derived from the analysis of particular cases presented as the preferred vantage point (Hamel, Dufour & Fortin, 1993). A preferred vantage point in this research is understood to mean networked southern NPOs that have been in existence for at least five years and can be said to be sectoral leaders in their particular areas of service or advocacy delivery.

Case studies benefit from prior development of conceptual frameworks, and are useful in answering 'how' and 'why' questions which in turn informs the data collection and analysis (Yin, 1994). Therefore, the conceptual framework as identified in the concluding part of the second chapter of this research is the foundation on which the research question has been asked and which forms the frame for data collection from the identified networked southern NPOs, its analysis, and the subsequent generalisation in concluding chapters

The conceptual practice areas identified for examination are people capacity, information and knowledge flows, systems, procedures, and stakeholder relationships. Their interactions and connections with the management of knowledge within the organisation, and the part played by information and communications technologies, will be mined for data, which will help in answering the research question. This will be achieved via a detailed analysis of the data, based on the conceptual framework

designed, using the coding methodology of the grounded theory analytical method.

3.8.1.1 Limitations of case studies

Case studies have been criticised on a number of levels, including the lack of representativeness; and the lack of rigour in the collection, construction, subjectivity of researcher and field informants which reflects on the conclusions drawn post analysis (Hamel *et al.,* 1993). It is noted that the case study approach is preferred, not as a replacement for theoretical or statistical approaches, but as a contextual examination that will help explain and enhance an understanding of the conceptual framework for this research.

The case study methodology is appropriate for this research methodology to answer the how and why of knowledge management practices in the areas identified, and how this in turn influences and affects the effectiveness of each networked southern NPO. Given the underlying theories above, the research design is built to draw out 'generalisable' and meaningful conclusions on the relationship between the knowledge management practices of these social change institutions and their effectiveness goals by using the case study methodology.

3.9. Data collection: triangulation and case study methodology

For any research design to result in qualitative social science research, it must identify the appropriate operational procedures for the concepts under consideration. This means it must construct validity, identify a cause-effect relationship (internal validity), identify the domain toward which the study's results can be generalised (external validity), and demonstrate that the procedure can be repeated with the same results (reliability) (Yin, 1994). The questions to be studied, what data are relevant, what data to collect, and how to analyse the results are important components to achieve this. Of

greater importance though for the credibility of the research outcome is the capability to establish that more than one angle has been used to observe, collect and analyse the data – in research this is known as triangulation, or observing and examining data from different view points.

Triangulation is based on the concept that it is better to look at something from different angles, i.e. multiple observation points. It is usually used in all types of qualitative research to achieve 'trustworthiness', referring particularly to the process of using multiple data collection methods, sources and analysis or theories to verify the validity of the findings. The theory is that if similar themes are noted in data collected from a variety of sources, the credibility of the interpretation is enhanced and can be applied to a broader range of similar cases. There are several types, including triangulation of measures, triangulation of observers, triangulation of theory, and triangulation of methods.

For this research, interviews were held with the leadership team within each organisation and included interactions with staff members, consultants and volunteers, and where possible, some of their stakeholders in relation to the core operations of the NPO and also for each activity and/or project being examined. Each person was interviewed with respect to the thematic areas presented as four sub-questions to gain an overall, but in-depth, understanding on the trends specific to each networked southern NPO. An understanding of the organisational goals and objectives was constructed via documentary analysis as well as using the respondents' responses in relation to the research sub-questions. Where available, existing documentation or previous evaluative studies on stakeholder perceptions, were also analysed.

An important principle of data collection applied in this research is the necessity to have multiple sources of evidence drawing on the principle of triangulation. The second principle used in this research is the creation of a case study database consisting of notes, documents, narratives and answers to questions, and lastly the maintenance of a credible chain of evidence by the researcher. These are all

important for the reliability of the information generated and the validity of the research outcome (Yin, 1994).

A wide range of data collection methods is used in case study research to gather information and make observations. For this research, data on people capacity, systems and procedures, information and knowledge flows, and relationships with stakeholders were gathered via document reviews and studies, face-to-face interviews, as well as the use of a semi-structured questionnaire sent via e-mail to recipients not resident in South Africa or not directly accessible to the researcher. This semi-structured questionnaire was also used as the guideline for the Skype and face-to-face interviews conducted.

This research focused on the core operations of networked southern NPOs and on specific activities and or projects within them. Data were gathered from each NPO via interviews or the administration of semi-structured questionnaires with at most nine people per organisation. From each organisation this meant two members of the executive board/advisory committee, two operational staff, as well as five project-based NPO members or staff were contacted and interviewed (a total of 27 from all three organisations). Respondents were identified based on their involvement in the programmatic aspects of the organisation, their leadership or staff role, and on recommendations from other respondents.

A documentary analysis of policies and strategies in place within each NPO was done. An analysis of policies and strategies was conducted in relation to the four conceptual themes, including interest in KM, technology and organisational effectiveness. The aim was to elicit and understand what each NPO has set in place and what the actual practices are. The themes were interrogated to analyse and compare what the practice actually is, and to determine how close or far off each NPO's practice influences their organisational effectiveness goals. This assisted in identifying cross-cutting issues and similarities across the organisations, from which lessons can be drawn and applied to NPOs in similar situations or with similar characteristics.

The research examined each of the four thematic areas of people capacity, knowledge and information flow, process and procedures, and stakeholder relationships, with a view to understanding the specific case of each NPO. This was done through interviews (face-to-face, Skype, telephone or e-mail based). The technologies in use were appraised and reviewed, alongside how interaction occurs with the stakeholders outside of the NPO. This is to inform the understanding of the tacit and implicit practices of each organisation in each of the areas of people capacity, system and procedures, information and knowledge flow, and stakeholder relationships as important aspects of knowledge management that contribute to organisational effectiveness.

3.10. Data analysis: coding, a grounded theory analytical approach

Yin (1994) specifically identifies five components of case study research design: a study's question(s); propositions if any; its unit(s) of analysis; the logic linking the data to the proposition; and the criteria for interpreting the findings. The data gathered on the three networked southern NPOs, i.e. their knowledge management practices, were analysed using the coding methodology from the grounded theory analytical approach to conform to the components identified by Yin (1994) for qualitative research.

Grounded theory is 'a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived theory about a phenomenon' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This theoretical method, as developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, is an alternative to what they saw as 'a predominantly rational approach' to theorising in sociology. Thus, rather than conceptualising theory and then testing it with data, in the grounded theory method the conceptualisation of theory is derived from data. This methodology 'combines the depth and richness of qualitative interpretive traditions with the logic, rigor and systematic analysis inherent in quantitative survey research' (Charmas, 2000).

The grounded theory approach pursues generalisations by making comparisons across social situations, giving flexibility to the research by allowing theory and data to interact and for the researcher to identify key causal differences and similarities. The basic idea of the grounded theory approach is to 'read (and re-read) a 'textual' database, discover and or label variables (called categories, concepts and properties) and their interrelationships' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The data to be analysed is not limited to just those gathered via documentary surveys, but can usually include observations of behaviour during interviews, field notes and such.

At the core of grounded theory methodology is the data analysis process. Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed grounded theory as a method that combined two data analysis processes. In the first process, the analyst codes all data and then systematically analyses these codes to verify or prove a given proposition. In the second process, the analyst does not engage in coding data *per se* but merely inspects the data for variables, labels or categories, uses memos to track the analysis, and develops theoretical ideas. They then does the researcher propose a hybrid approach to data analysis; 'One that combines, by an analytic procedure of constant comparison, the explicit coding procedure of the first approach and the style of theory development of the second' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Similarly, qualitative data analysis seeks to organise and reduce the data gathered into themes or essences, which, in turn, can be fed into descriptions, models, or theories. To code, data are broken down, compared, and then placed in a category. Similar data are placed in similar categories, and different data create new categories. Coding in the qualitative research environment is thus an iterative, inductive, yet reductive process that organises data, from which the researcher can then construct themes, essences, descriptions, and theories.

Open coding, in grounded theory, is similar to its use within the qualitative traditions, but it is also much more. It is a 'well-defined process that begins with basic description and moves to conceptual ordering and then on to theorising' (Patton, 2002). The open

coding methodology develops during the data collection process; its continuing conceptualisation and operationalisation occurs simultaneously.

It is concerned with 'identifying, naming, categorising and describing phenomena' found via the data collection to answer the research questions. It can be done systematically or quite informally. In using this analytical method, it is important to maintain an inventory of codes with their descriptions. In this study, the purpose of using the open coding analytical method is to gain a concrete understanding and interpretation of the data gathered via the interviews, surveys and documentary analysis of the three organisations.

This research looks at the specific activities of these networked southern NPOs and is informed by an analytical understanding and comparison of NPO's management, organisational effectiveness and ICT for development concepts. This is in relation to an examination of the knowledge management system being used by the three southern NPOs from the perspective of people capacity, information and knowledge flows, processes and procedures, and stakeholder relationships.

These are the four units of analysis used for the study. The goal is to analyse the case study data generated by identifying the causal links and building an explanation about the cases (individual and several) in relation to the conceptual framework proposed, then drawing general conclusions that act as future points of reference in related studies. The study concludes with recommendations for social change organisations in similar contexts.

Within the framework of this research, the data collected were coded for each NPO, based on the four thematic areas (the units of analysis) being studied with sections on the use of technology, relation and application to knowledge management, and the influence or connection to organisational effectiveness. An interrogation of each case study data was done to ensure the clarity and integrity of the data collected via the interviews and documentary analysis. Where gaps were perceived in the data

collected by the researcher, the NPO was revisited for clarification. Hermeneutic principles were applied in drawing out meaning from the data collected while balancing subjectivity and objectivity by verifying the interpretation of such meanings with the source of the data. Where the interpretations could not be verified across data sources it is noted and qualified as potentially inapplicable across a wider range of NPOs.

3.11. Delimitations, limitations and significance of the research

3.11.1 Delimitations

The established norm is that NPOs, though different in their goals and aims, are established and managed in the same way as for-profit entities in most areas, utilising similar knowledge management structures. This research is delimited by the uniqueness of the type of NPOs being studied. This is in terms of their networked and dispersed nature, language of choice in the case of the APC (English, Spanish and French) and complexity of operations. This is taken into consideration in drawing conclusions that can be applied to other NPOs and in other research.

3.11.2 Limitations

A major limitation of this research is the existence of a relatively small number of NPOs with similar characteristics, such as reach of network, life span, structures and activities, thus potentially limiting the view of the researcher. Some of the interviews were conducted telephonically, via Skype and via e-mail. This is due to the schedule and physical spread of some of the respondents. Another major limitation is the loyalty that came across very strongly in all respondents. This influences the data for the study in that subjective, and not objective answers, were at times given.

3.11.3 Significance

The significance of the research is that it adds knowledge, specific to networked southern non-profit organisations on KM practices using ICTs that directly impact on the effectiveness of such organisations. This adds to the bridging of the knowledge gap on how such organisations can leverage the resources – financial, human, technological or infrastructure – available to them within and across the networks they are a part of to effectively deliver on their core social change goals

CHAPTER 4. CREATING SOCIAL CHANGE: THE APC

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings on the APC, which locates the research data within the conceptual framework for knowledge management (KM) identified earlier on. This framework identifies key concepts within the knowledge management discourse that is directly relevant to a networked southern NPO's effectiveness in their area of engagement, i.e. in creating social change.

The chapter begins with a brief look at the APC's historic beginnings and its emergence as an NPO primarily focused on creating equitable and direct access to information, communication and knowledge. It then discusses the present day APC and how the organisation operates its programmes and projects. Within each section, an examination of key KM engagements is presented.

The chapter then delivers an analysis of the findings from the perspective of the framework proposed. This analysis offers interesting additions to the discourse on what, and how, KM practices contribute to a southern NPO's effectiveness. The chapter is wrapped up with a conclusion on the lessons from the APC case study for improving the effectiveness of southern NPOs through the practice of knowledge management.

4.2. Methodology and limitations

Data were gathered via an analysis of APC documents and publications. The APC website was also extensively scoured for information on its historical background. Key informant interviews were done via scoping emails, Skype-based interviews, e-mail questionnaires, face-to-face and telephonic interviews.

The virtual nature of the APC presented timing scheduling challenges for this study as respondents are geographically dispersed across very different time zones. This also reduced the number of face-to-face interviews to a minimum, though the technology-assisted interviews via Skype and e-mail showed APC people's unique familiarity and comfort with operating in a virtual space. Respondents were all passionate about their work and the APC network, which means information shared was tainted by bias and respondents themselves flagged this.

4.3. History of APC

The story of the APC begins in 1982, 16 years before its incorporation as a non-profit organisation in 1998 under section 501(c) (3), public charity status 170 (b) (1) (A) (vi) State of California, USA; and 13 years prior to June 1995 when it received consultative (Category 1) status to the UN.

Between 1982 and 1987, a private community of individuals founded a number of independent non-profit computer networks with experience in communications and international collaboration. Of direct relevance to the formation of the APC is an organisation formed in 1984 called 'Interdoc'. It was created by a small group of southern, international non-governmental aid-giving organisations which, with funding from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), had 'managed to install, use and experiment with computer communications, demonstrating that it might be possible to share databases, e-mail, and conferences using international communications in ways that did not compromise any of their critical advocacy agendas' (Pinney, 1997, as cited in Murphy, 2007).

The organisations that formed Interdoc were all, in one way or another, directly

engaged in social change in their particular locales and this directly influenced the APC's eventual objectives and operations. Some of these organisations included IDOC, a United Nations' (UN) sponsored organisational data management NGO, IBASE[1] from Brazil, ICDA[2] in Belgium, development research institutions such as CODESRIA[3] in Senegal, AMRC[4] in Hong Kong, Antenna and SATIS, both from the Netherlands (the latter is a database development organisation servicing 100 grassroots technology groups). Other organisations engaged in the formation of the APC were the Human Rights Information and Documentation Systems from Norway, ILET[5] from Chile, and the International Development Education Research Agency in Canada.

Parallel to Interdoc and its members playing a significant part in the founding and formation of the APC, other social change organisations also had significant roles in its origins. These include GreenNet in the UK, networks in Sweden (NordNet), Canada (Web Networks), Brazil (IBASE), Nicaragua (Nicarao), Australia (Pegasus) and the Institute for Global Communications (IGC) (then known as PeaceNet/EcoNet). This was done by collaboratively '…sharing electronic conference material, demonstrating that trans-national electronic communications could serve international as well as domestic communities working for peace, human rights and the environment' (APC, 2009).

These organisations, seeing the need and value in creating networks to facilitate social

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[1] IBASE: Instituto Brasileiro de Análises Sociais e Economicas

[2] ICDA: International Coalition for Development Action

[3] CODESRIA: Conseil pour le Developpement de la Recherché en Science Sociales en Afrique

[4] AMRC: Asia Monitor Research Centre

[5] ILET: Instituto Latinamericano de Estudios Transnationales

justice engagements and help each other to serve civil society more effectively, used the Interdoc conference organised by Antenna in 1990, to plan the creation of an association of non-profit organisations called the APC. This marked the beginning of the APC and the emergence of its coordination and operating foundations.

This association, according to Murphy (2005) 'was used to inform and empower worker organisations, link grassroots activists, facilitate community based research and education, bridge international political fault lines, collect and circulate human rights data and disseminate information on sustainable development'. This community was driven by a commitment to facilitate access to new communication techniques for movements working for social change locally, within and across continents.

The APC, its community of practitioners and their networked computers, had an immense impact which in the course of the ensuing decade (the 1990s) was credited with 'literally changing the face and re-making of global civil society by putting NGOs on an equal footing with states and multilateral organisations' (Warkentin *et al*., 2001). This they did by using these networks to organise campaigns and forums at UN conferences (such as the Earth Summit), and share information and communication as a collaborative resource for activists and NGOs across Europe, Latin America, North America and Africa. In so doing, they effectively initiated and sustained a rapid change in social dynamics in the sphere of public policy making.

In the words of the current APC Executive Director:

> *'It [the APC] was initially focused on providing infrastructure to communicate and share information for activists and networks using networks set up in UNDP offices across countries, It also sought to build technological capacity as commercial Internet became readily accessible. After this its mission shifted to supporting skills training, a focus on content and then to policy advocacy' (Esterhuysen, 2009).*

In 1991, a southern and northern NGOs meeting in Nairobi, Kenya identified e-mail and the APC conferences as a tool for distance-lobbying the Earth Summit. This led to the first meeting of APC partners in southern Africa, hosted by WorkNet (now known as SANGONeT and the first African organisation to join the APC) in Johannesburg.

This was long before any of these nations would have widespread Internet access, even in urban areas. This bears testament to the efficacy of the APC model to meet a social need by creating the interactive knowledge spaces and access to these for hitherto unheard voices to contribute to social change beyond the limitations of distance. By the end of 1991, seven more nations had become a part of the APC computer network, including South Africa, Senegal and Nigeria.

Today the APC has grown into a global non-profit network of 52 members in 37 countries and partner networks. Its mission is to 'empower and support organisations, social movements and individuals in and through the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to build strategic communities and initiatives for the purpose of making meaningful contributions to equitable human development, social justice, participatory political processes and environmental sustainability' (APC, 2009).

They do this in a practical way and in their own words indicate that they:

> *'… help people get access to the Internet where there is none or it is unaffordable, we help grassroots groups use the technology to develop their communities and further their rights, and we work to make sure that* government *policies related to information and communication serve the best interests of the general population, especially people living in developing countries' (APC, 2009).*

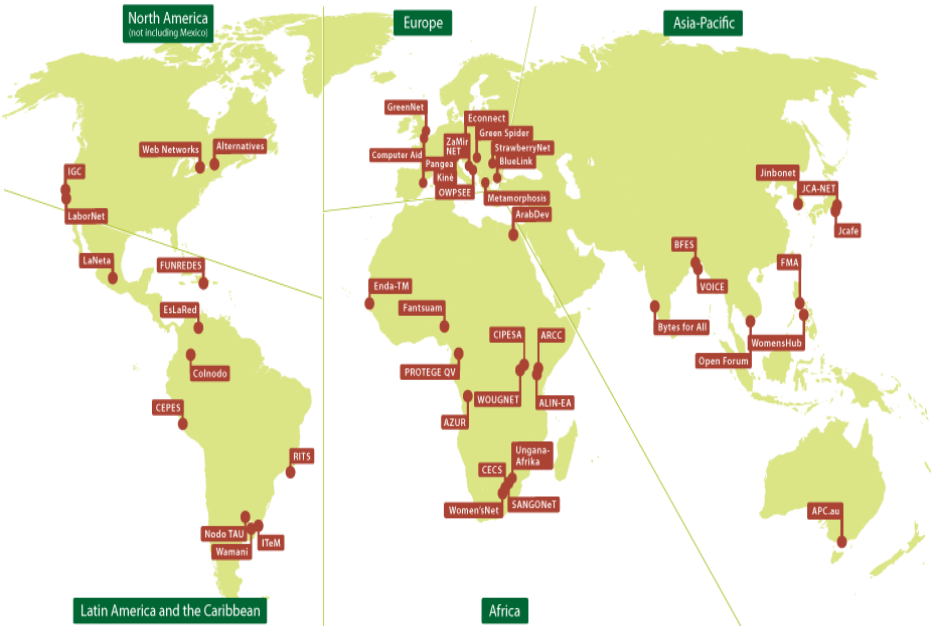

Figure 4.1 APC Members by Region (APC, 2009)

4.4. APC people, governance and programmes

The APC, from its informal beginnings in the ‘80s as a community of like-minded individuals and organisations, has grown to be ‘one of the world’s largest computer networking institutions serving non-governmental organisations dedicated to human rights, social, economic and environmental justice and political change during the 1990’s’ (Murphy, 2005). The driving need for better information and communications resources, and for technologies to share and store as well as access this knowledge, continues to be a core part of the APC mission and goal, not just as a commitment to its member and partner constituency, but to itself as an organisation.

Looking back at the beginnings of the APC, access to and flow of information and knowledge has continued to be critical to its ability to create social change. The APC is a key facilitator for the generation and sharing of locally and internationally relevant knowledge, which has a direct impact on creating social change; either in the policy or

implementation spaces.

> *'…[The APC] is very virtual in nature with online routines, documents and procedures. There is also the use of conventional structures with groups working in teams with online check-ins…this can be hard for planning, problem solving and decision making by preventing ad-hoc decision making…' (Esterhuysen, 2009).*

This highly distributed and networked nature of the APC, where staff are physically dispersed across the world, requires a highly sophisticated knowledge management system and flexible governance structures to adequately manage communications and knowledge while meeting its mission of 'Internet for social justice and sustainable development.

4.4.1 People

The APC, in its 2009 strategic action plan, states 'its strength lies in its membership – a mix of organisations from developing and developed countries – and our professional staff, and their combined knowledge and experience of promoting and using ICTs at local, national and regional levels' (APC, 2009).

It defines its people as those who in one way or another contribute to strengthening the network, including the nurturing of contacts and relationships of collaboration with partner organisations. This includes the individuals from APC member groups who are council representatives, those who serve on the APC's executive board, as well as those working for the APC, either as paid or contractual staff, as volunteers and 'friends'. These make up the human resources of the APC and their administration follows set guidelines in the HR manual, which speaks to the conditions and criteria for the hiring of staff, the conditions of employment, and remuneration policies, amongst other issues.

The APC has a core staff, overseen by a management team, who lead the core areas of APC's engagement and are directly responsible for maintaining basic APC operations and institutional infrastructure and integrity in relation to its mandate of creating social change using ICT and new electronic media. APC staff plays an intellectual, administrative and implementation support role throughout the strategy development process.

The APC work systems includes communications, media and promotions; financial management; evaluation and learning; human resources; network development; and strategic management and fundraising. The management team, led by the executive director and with the support of the executive board, is responsible for ensuring that the organisation focuses on, and achieves, its strategic priorities. This includes advocating for affordable Internet access for all, making technology work to sustain the environment, building the information commons, securing and defending Internet rights, improving, strategic relationship building and financial mobilisation. Overall, the staff is engaged in leveraging emerging technologies for social change across the stated priority areas.

The APC communications team plays a key role in achieving these objectives by helping to build and shape its public profile and by ensuring an active, recognisable, representative presence in the media and in target communities and policy systems across the world.

A major part of the organisational culture is one of continuing reflection via evaluation, and this relies on a constant flow of communication, reporting and analysis of the successes and failures of the various projects and operations.

4.4.2 Governance

The APC operates a two-tiered governance structure to ensure its long-term sustainable development and growth. This consists of an international board of

directors[6] (elected by members) and a council, made up of representatives of APC's member organisations. The APC board meets virtually, on a consistent basis, though they are physically dispersed across the world. They have face-to-face meetings, which are usually piggybacked on larger events, either organised by the APC itself, or by a partner organisation. The board members usually serve between four to six years before they are up for re-election.

All APC's powers and activities are exercised and overseen by the board, with certain powers reserved specifically for the council. The board of directors serves as the APC's primary governing body, making policy and management decisions working with the executive director and staff to implement the strategic priorities decided by members. This departs from the traditional role of board members as these are also actively engaged in, and members of, the network.

The board is renewed every three years, when council elects between four and eight directors from amongst its members depending on how many of these have completed the accepted term of two three year services back-to-back. The council, on the other hand, is made up of two representatives from each member organisation. These, in turn, have the primary function of electing the board from within the council.

There is also a dedicated team of part-time and consulting staff, who are responsible for the effective and transparent management of APC's overall finances. This includes maintaining the APC's books, budgeting, and reporting of expenditures.

The APC uses a participatory governance style with the most 'power' lying with the

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[6] APC Board members: Danilo Lujambio (Argentina), Valentina Pellisser (Bosnia and Hersegovina), Magella Sigillito (Uruguay), Andrew Garton (Australia), Anriette Esterhuysen (South Africa), Michel Lambert (Canada), Al Algre (Phillipines), James Nguo (Kenya)

member's council (MC). They elect members of the board and play a major role in identifying and developing the networks' strategic direction. The executive board is charged with making strategic decisions, including final decisions on recommendations on project and membership related issues. The overall strategic direction of the organisation is defined by the council of members of the APC, with the board of directors signing off on the final strategy. This strategy does not necessarily prescribe projects.

4.4.3 Programmes, projects and activities

The APC is 'dedicated to empowering and supporting groups and individuals working for peace, human rights, development and protection of the environment, through the strategic use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), including the Internet' (APC, 2006). This remains unchanged, as is evidenced in its 2009-2012 strategic action plan:

> *'In a two year long process beginning in 2006 APC members and staff re-assessed the context faced by APC and civil society organisations using Internet and ICTs for social change by looking at trends on how people access Internet, policy and regulation and in social networking and media. As a result members identified six strategic priorities to be tackled in the next four years towards achieving APC's enduring vision "that all people have easy and affordable access to a free and open Internet to improve their livelihoods and create a more just world"' (APC, 2009).*

The six priority areas are focused on advocating for affordable Internet access for all, making technology work to sustain the environment, using emerging technologies for social change, building the information commons, securing and defending Internet rights, and improving governance, especially Internet governance.

The APC has a large repertoire of knowledge products and activities in place which are

used to deliver on plans. The plans are carried out in three broad areas; namely policy, strategic uses programmes and the women's networking support programme. Within each of these broad areas, the APC is involved with knowledge generation and dissemination via policy briefs, issue papers, research-knowledge related events, and training manuals. A number of these knowledge products and activities are the mini-cases for this research and will be discussed in further detail in this chapter.

4.4.3.1 Policy programme

This programme is active in the global, regional and national policy arenas. It is designed to address 'ICT policy holistically, recognising that, in an era of globalisation facilitated by the rapid growth of the Internet and broadband networks, ICT policy reform can be coherently addressed only with reference to developments in other spaces' (APC, 2009). It works with an emphasis on facilitating and providing relevant input from previously marginalised voices, particularly in the global south, by supporting their incorporation into policy formulation in all three arenas.

Data gathered during this study shows how the APC learns from stakeholders with real experience of ICT policy formation and implementation, either regionally or in their own countries. It then shows how the learning's are applied to policy developments and how it contributes to the 'opening and expansion of key policy processes such as the SA broadband strategy and the Internet Governance Forum' (APC, 2009). Projects and activities in developing country contexts are informed by the APC's focus on access to infrastructure, particularly broadband Internet infrastructure outside main urban areas.

Over the last 10 years, the APC has initiated and implemented projects such as the engagement with the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), Communication for Influence in Central, East and West Africa (CICEWA); conducted a media piracy study across African countries. They have conducted research on Open Access in Africa: EASSy, SAT-3/WASC Research and FibreForAfrica.net; Catalysing Access to ICTs in Africa (CATIA); conducted a study on the effects and possibilities of ICT for the enhancement

of democracy, as well as publishing a series of ICT policy monitors for each continent[7].

Over the last decade, this programme has played an active and strategic role in influencing and changing the way policy on the information society is formulated, both within and beyond country borders. This it has been achieved by bringing to bear local voices in the policy debates and negotiations. It also connected otherwise disconnected localities - with similar issues on access and local content - to each other, thus strengthening the advocacy for cheaper and broader access to new technologies, in particular the Internet. This has brought about change in government policy in countries as far apart as Brazil and the Philippines.

4.4.3.2 Strategic Uses Programme (SUP)

This programme area is focused on availability of and accessibility to ICTs, skills and awareness of ICTs and understanding organisational context and needs across all constituents. It is tasked with enabling civil society organisations by making them aware of what ICTs are available to achieve their mission, understanding their own organisational contexts and needs, and then equipping them with the requisite skills and knowledge to use these tools effectively and securely.

This focus on capacity building and training is hinged on promoting the use of free and open source software, open and/or flexible licensing for training materials, and wherever and whenever possible, other low-cost computing and connectivity options. Some of the projects in this programme area include ItrainOnline, Rapid Response Network (RRN), APC Betinho Communications Prise, Wireless in Africa and LAC, GreeningIT - APC on ICTs, Climate Change & Environmental Sustainability, Web 2.0

[7] www.apc.org/en/projects

tools for development amongst others.[8]

In the APC tradition of serving both internal and external needs, most of its member organisations have, and are, in one way or another, created change effectively both in and across their locales. They utilise the repertoire of capacity building knowledge products developed by the APC community to train and inform different sectors of society in the strategic uses of ICT, while at the same time influencing policy processes through the information and knowledge gathered. This relates to specific issues and interest areas as diverse as peace and security, building rural wireless networks, and helping to shape gendered technology policy, thus creating social change at the bottom and the top echelons of society.

4.4.3.3 Women's Networking Support Programme (APC WNSP)

The APC WNSP is unique in that it is both a programme and a network of women, throughout the world, committed to using technology for women's empowerment. Its main focus is to 'promote gender equality in the design, implementation, and access to and use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and in the policy decisions and frameworks that regulate them' (APC, 2009). 'The APC WNSP began in 1993 and operated relatively independently. It was integrated into the wider APC network in 2001/2 (Esterhuysen, 2009).

Its specific projects include the Feminist Tech Exchange, GenARDIS, GenderIT.org, Gender Evaluation Methodology for Internet and ICTs (GEM), Open Net Initiative-Asia: Development & Implementation of a Gender Research Framework on Censorship & Surveillance Practices and EroTICs, which is an exploratory research project into

[8] www.apc.org/en/projects

sexuality and the Internet, to name a few.[9]

The APC WNSP programme focus is on creatively adapting and utilising the Internet for activism across the world, its active evaluation and deepening of knowledge through lessons learned on how women remain marginalised even within ICT for development projects. 'It is also expressed through the assertion of women's right to expression as well as privacy, especially in relation to sexuality, in international policy debates around content regulation of the Internet' (APC, 2007). This very diverse range of projects and activities creates social change using knowledge management practices, tools and technologies to build, harness and apply the potential of women activists and gender-focused organisations across a broader spectrum within and beyond their localities.

4.5. Knowledge products and areas of activity

In seeking to answer the main research question and to understand the interrelationships of the units of analysis within the research framework in relation to the APC, five crosscutting knowledge products, events and activities will be examined and analysed, using the research data gathered.

4.5.1 SA Broadband Strategy Project

The SA Broadband Strategy Project is driven by the goal of making affordable broadband access a national priority, as is the case in the United States where strategic investments in affordable broadband access have been adopted.

[9] www.apc.org/en/projects

The project aims to contribute to shape a coherent policy framework to guide the diffusion of broadband. It makes the case for government to bring all stakeholders in alignment via a consultative process on key objectives such as infrastructure, content, eGovernance / eCitizenships, education and health. It also begins to address the needs specific to South Africa and the opportunities for direct investment in economic growth and development with the roll out of broadband infrastructure[10] (Broadband, 2009).

As a first step, the APC and three other organisations held a workshop in May 2009, and put together a South African broadband strategy framework. Following the workshop, this framework was posted on the Internet to solicit signatories, as a basis for advocacy to the Department of Communications. The Internet was considered an effective means to spread the word for this advocacy exercise, particularly through the use of blogging.[11] This they are doing by leveraging existing APC member and partner networks and also referring relevant actors to it as a living document geared to result in policy change around the issue of broadband access for all.

This is a demonstration of how the use of Internet-based knowledge management platforms are being used to shape social change, as the website which hosts the framework and the project allows people to comment, give feedback in relation to the entire project, suggest changes, blog and create communities of practice around specific aspects of the proposed policy changes. They have gone a step further and created a means by which other countries across the world can also directly use whatever information and knowledge has been captured and created so far to take the first step for their own broadband strategy.

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[10] Seacom, a submarine cable initiative, will link South Africa to India and Europe by mid-2009, breaking the monopoly of Telkom's SAT3 cable and bringing down the cost of international bandwidth.

[11] This project was initiated by a blog post by Willie Currie who heads the CIPP program for the APC.

4.5.2 GISWatch

The Global Information Society Watch report focuses on information and communications technologies and how they are being implemented in different countries across the world. The purpose of the report is to 'stimulate a collaborative approach to policy advocacy, and to create a common platform where disparate experiences can be shared' and in the long-term impact on policy development processes in countries, regions, and at a global level (GISWatch, 2009).

Initiated in 2007, GISWatch has a different thematic focus each year with the 2009 report focused on 'access to online information and knowledge – advancing human rights and democracy'. It includes 48 country analyses on the status of access to online information and knowledge with several thematic reports on intellectual property rights, knowledge rights, open standards and access to educational materials and libraries, as well as an institutional overview and a reflection on indicators that track access to information and knowledge.

This is both an online and offline publication that captures knowledge across countries on the changing phases of information and communications with technological advances and how this impacts on social dynamics when access is uneven. It is learning and evaluative in nature, sharing both best and worst practices as learnt over the past year, not only by APC members but the wider world. Its simply written opinion pieces also help to shed light the status of access to, and content, in this technological age. It is targeted at a range of policy makers, practitioners and the public at large.

4.5.3 Gender Evaluation Methodology (GEM) for Internet and ICTs

The Gender Evaluation Methodology (GEM) is an online tool and guide that integrates gender analysis into evaluations of initiatives that uses information communication technologies for social change (APC, 2009). Developed in 2000, GEM was birthed via a reflective workshop on women's networking for over a decade in an attempt to build a

collective understanding of the real impact of their work in changing women's lives. In the words of the APC WNSP Programme Manager:

> *'…instead of arriving at definitive answers, we ended up asking more questions about change, empowerment and ICTs. What changes are empowering for women? How do these changes shift gender relations between women and men? How can we tell if ICTs are making a difference in these changes? How do we measure these changes? These questions led to months of research, meetings and painstaking writing. At that time, evaluations of ICT projects were very hard to come by. Evaluation tools for ICT projects were only beginning to be explored, mainly through the work of the International Development Research Centre which was developing an evaluation framework for ICTs for development projects. APC WNSP provided the gender related perspective in this endeavour through proposals around building gender considerations in evaluation frameworks that were largely gender neutral. Given the dearth in the ICT field, our research drew heavily from the evaluation field, which though rich in frameworks, tools and experiences were otherwise wanting of a strong gender component. In the end, we went back to our roots. We engaged gender evaluation models, which while mostly clueless in relation to ICT or technology for that matter, gave us grounding in investigating what really mattered most if we wanted to probe deeply about power and relations – between men and women, among classes and races, ethnicities, disabilities, and religions and other inequalities that define women's conditions in society.' (GEM, 2009).*

The mix of all these distilled knowledge areas generated a hybrid tool. GEM provides a means for determining whether ICTs are really improving women's lives and gender relations as well as promoting positive change at the individual, institutional, community and broader social levels. GEM is not a set of instructions and rules but also a project and a community. GEM, the community, was born in Cuernavaca, a small town south of Mexico City in May 2002, in the first workshop of GEM testers, the first users of the tool.

They were joined by organisations from Asia, then Africa who learned about the GEM tool in Zanzibar, Tanzania and finally by women from Central and Eastern European countries who gathered in Prague for the final testing workshop. The participants in these workshops, numbering around 100, were the first members of the GEM practitioner's network – a learning community of women's information centres, community radio networks, community telecentres, education and training initiatives, e-governance projects, Internet and service providers, from both rural and urban areas. It is this evolving and participatory process which informs the practicality and effectiveness of GEM as a useful methodology that this research explored.

The tool undergoes continuous development through its implementation by GEM practitioners and the GEM community via creative adaptations in different initiatives, as well as improvement post application from feedback on its applicability. As a guide, GEM provides users with an overview of the evaluation process (including links to general evaluation resources) and outlines suggested strategies and methodologies for incorporating a gender analysis throughout the evaluation process.

From the combined knowledge and experience of a talented community of ICT practitioners, gender specialists and evaluators who participated as researchers, critical reviewers, resource persons and workshop facilitators, the tool continues to be modified – widening its reach and applicability and increasing its usefulness to various contexts, areas and advocacies. GEM has partners in over 25 countries evaluating 32 projects, has organised and facilitated 25 workshops with over 350 participants, and has presented GEM in over 50 events across 25 countries.

4.5.4 GenderIT.org

GenderIT.org is an open community for any individual or organisation, including women's movements, information and communication technology (ICT) advocates and policy makers who want to ensure that ICT policy meets women's needs and does not infringe on their rights. It maps the intersections between women's issues, such as violence against women and economic empowerment, with ICT issues.

The portal has been called a 'treasure trove on gender and ICT' by users for its practical tools, guidelines, original content and analysis of policy frameworks, and the opportunity it gives users to publish resources or other information related to gender and ICT policy.

GenderIT.org emerged because of long-term researching, classifying, interpreting and monitoring of ICT policies, which affect women around the world with a focus on Africa, Asia-Pacific, Central Eastern Europe and Latin America. Two components of this

knowledge portal are the Feminist Talk Forum which allows for live coverage and reporting on related events, and Gender Centred, a thematic bulletin that focuses on gender-inclusive ICT policies and discussions targeted at women's rights advocates, policy makers, and development sectors, amongst others.

This project's portal also has a wide range of knowledge offerings; including articles, gender assessments, case studies, policy papers and other resources on ICT policy and women's issues. It has a learning section called 'Beginners Section' which features introductory material targeted at those who are new to, or have little or knowledge of, its core area of focus. It also has a 'how to' section dedicated to providing guidance and information on drafting gender-sensitive ICT policy frameworks. A section of the portal is dedicated to 'live' reports from various events related to its core mission – sharing news from the forefront of both policy and practice with an engaged community of policy makers and practitioners.

Again, as with other APC projects, GenderIT.org emerged from its advocacy work in information and communications technologies (ICTs), recognising the need for standardised 'examples of national policy, gender-sensitive language, tools for lobbying, and an understanding of the impact of poor or positive policy all within easy access has been expressed by ICT advocates and policy makers alike' (APC, 2009).

4.6. Research findings

All APC programmes and projects are in one way or another interrelated and interdependent. There is an ongoing cross fertilisation of information across projects as well as a cross utilisation of resources, including staff, technologies and systems.

The following section discusses from a KM perspective the findings specific to the APC case study in the context of the projects discussed so far.

The findings are clustered within the four units of analysis of the research framework – people capacity, systems and procedures, information and knowledge flow, and stakeholder relations. Aspects of this research's units of analysis, not identified in its framework, also emerge as key to the organisation's effectiveness in creating social change. Of particular interest are people capacities where personal interests, passion, and commitment, all related to motivation, play a significant role in adherence to KM practices. The APC's flexible governance structure also cuts across all the units of analysis as it allows for creativity and adaptations to implementation strategies.

4.6.1 People capacity

Of the three case study organisations, the APC has the largest collective number of 'people' – including permanent staff, consultants, interns and volunteers - an average of 22. This does not reflect the roles or functions served, as a number occupy multiple roles and perform multiple functions across the organisation. It should also be noted that it is only the APC who have 'members' and not just subscribers to its network i.e. they identify themselves as APC.

4.6.1.1 Multiple roles, multiple sources of knowledge

This study found that in all parts of the organisations its people play multiple roles internally and externally. This includes staff fulfilling several roles within the organisation, and in some cases, there were staff that worked part-time across three different organisations in three different 'largely' unrelated roles.

> *'…in terms of hats…was board member of Women'sNet…member of WNSP mostly active regionally in Africa, involved in GEM, Beinjing+5 work, training and capacity building, policy advocacy and then started work in 2002 as the coordinator of APC-Africa-women when we received {sic} funding…' (Radloff, 2009)*

'…I served on the board first as a secretary then as the chairperson…I support work of CIPP colleague in LAC…am an active part of all APC lists so I can pick up on opportunities ad issue areas for ICTs…I double up as research coordinator in the policy sector and in a number of the CIPP programmes…my ToR shifts and is re-shaped with some things taken and others added…' (Primo, 2009)

APC people tend to have accumulated a range of knowledge across varying role areas, due to having occupied the role as a member, individual or organisation, the role as a staff member, or in the role of implementing or as a donor partner, and in some cases, the role of a board member. This knowledge, both tacit and visible, is shared and utilised as the need arises to the benefit of the project and in other cases the organisation. In the words of a respondent:

' …I joined [APC] as a member of WNSP which invites individual members… …I was [also] working as a member of the African Gender institute and membership really helped my work …' (Radloff, 2009)

This multiplicity of roles results in information and knowledge-sharing dynamics for APC people. In the case of the respondent above, as a member she was able to garner knowledge which directly impacted on her ability to effectively deliver on her work within her own organisation. This respondent is now a full staff member of the APC and again, the wealth of tacit knowledge she has is a treasure for the organisation. The negative aspect to this, though, is there is not much evidence that fresh and different or varying views of thinking and knowledge are regularly imputed into the network if it continually recycles the same people in various roles.

The retention of people is not common across most southern NPOs, due to funding amongst other issues, and how APC is able to retain its people is an interesting lesson for such to look into – by consistently building their capacity and giving them responsibilities which goes beyond their established skills set. Again this could

potentially have resulted in project failures where knowledgeable mentors do not support these roles.

4.6.1.2 Fluidity/flexibility in information and knowledge sharing

In relation to the findings on multiple roles, it was also discovered that even though staff's (both permanent, contract, volunteers etc.) tasks and deliverables are well set out in their terms of reference, these are continuously evolving, with some staff taking on more responsibilities and deliverables than specified in their terms of reference. There are also instances where people take up the incomplete tasks in a particular staff member's work-load which has been unfilled either due to personal issues or work overload. For instance, an organisational member of the APC stepped in to assist with delivery on a proposal document that was near deadline but not completed due to the lead having had a series of personal 'disasters'.

Respondents identified that this has both a positive and a negative effect on their delivery and achievement of the project goals. On the positive side, it helps broaden their knowledge, adds new skills sets, and helps in identifying areas of common interest and synergies. On the negative side, there is a tendency for one project to receive more attention or focus due to personal interests, funding, or being driven by more demanding partners and/or deadlines.

Again a balance is required if this fluidity in roles and flexibility of terms of reference is to be adopted. Adopting flexibility means staff can be optimally utilised if, and only if, they are equipped with the right support system in the organisation and beyond to help them fulfil such roles. This would also address the issue of knowledge departing from the organisation if information is captured in a standardised way and shared as projects progress.

4.6.1.3 Peer-to-peer skills and knowledge sharing

Directly related to, and emerging from, the fluidity of specified tasks is the growth of a peer-to-peer skills development and knowledge sharing culture within the APC. There are a series of vibrant 'internal people networks' with 'experts' within them who drive skills-sharing around issues and projects.

> *'In South Africa we have a saying which as very much part of the anti-apartheid movement "each one teach[es] one". It was how it was in APC and in the women's programme – we were continually teaching each other, sharing knowledge and skills and …we were always supported.' (Radloff, 2009)*

There are no specific formalised rules guiding these interactions though there is a conscious creation of 'virtual' spaces, such as custom designed intranets where they are encouraged. This informal learning and the support structures build the people's capacities while utilising knowledge-sharing pathways using ICTs.

The challenge this presents, though, is individuals have to 'find' the relevant knowledge to feed their skills gap, and those who provide these are somewhat inundated and do not necessarily have the time to address or mentor them (largely due to having multiple roles with fluid terms of reference; i.e. working where the needs exists the most). A formal or semi-formal learning strategy within the organisation would help address these shortfalls, as evidenced in the section on informal learning and training virtual spaces.

4.6.1.4 Informal learning and training in virtual spaces

The knowledge exchanges above happens across the four interwoven parts of the APC, i.e. the staff, executive board, council and members, but is driven by individual interest seeking. There are forums where topical issues are discussed or points of interest can be raised by anyone, which then serve as a fertile ground for research and project ideas. An example is the APC broadband strategy project, which is in its relative infancy.

This was picked up by a senior staff member who heard President Obama's speech, which had as one of its main points a focus on broadband as a major arsenal to addressing a broad range of issues, including economic inequality. The staff then drew parallels across most African countries. This in itself contributes to the retention of information and knowledge generated during project implementation within the APC, as evidenced by the detailed knowledge history the APC has garnered over the last decade and the number of years most staff interviewed have spent with the organisation.

These 'informal' learning and training spaces are lifelines for new APC staff as there is no formalised induction or introduction to APC in practice within the NPO. This could possibly be traced to APC being largely focused on having 'experienced' personnel who are brought on board due to their extensive knowledge and networks. This has both a negative and positive connotation as it means that the staff 'hit the ground running' and can deliver on objectives faster. At the other side of the spectrum, though, is that new personnel have their initial performance hampered by 'working or learning to work in a new organisation with unfamiliar processes'.

This is an issue faced by a majority of NPOs and not just southern NPOs. With the right internal KM strategy (including, but not limited to clear documentation formats, information sharing, standardised information storing methods) and with the use of ICTs, knowledge can be accessed at the click of a few links.

4.6.1.5 Staff longevity and succession planning

No sample of relatively inexperienced or un-networked staff hiring was found in the APC organisational history from 2000. All but one staff member interviewed had worked in one capacity or the other prior to the role they then took up within the APC. This identifies the issue of 'succession planning' within the APC. No evidence was seen, inferred or referred to during interviews and document reviews on a plan to manage and elicit tacit knowledge of staff via mentoring or internships where the main

goal is for the 'learning staff' to transfer knowledge to personnel in the lower rungs of the organisation[12]. To some extent this role is played by the informal virtual learning spaces but not as a result of formalised strategies for succession.

This relates to the finding on the 'longevity' of core APC staff. It was discovered that a majority of APC staff (interviewed and un-interviewed), and in particular the management team, had been on the team and in their present positions for 5-10 years[13].

> *'…around 1997 [I] joined APC Women's Networking Support programme as a member then started working as the African coordinator of the women's programme in 2002' (Radloff, 2009)*

It should be noted that some of these long-serving members had served in one capacity or another within the APC network prior to becoming staff members. This speaks to an internal undocumented practice for looking within the network prior to searching externally.

This could be a sustainability strategy and would require further research to understand non-profit organisations' sustainability strategies. On the positive side it means the APC has living knowledge references retained within the organisation which then directly impact on its ability to continue to be effective by learning from the past via these long-serving staff members.

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[12] There is a very strong document and information management system, which is, discussed in detail in the Information and knowledge flow section of this report.

[13] The average number of years served by APC staff interviewed was five years.

4.6.1.6 Passion, interest, family and activist orientation

The question that comes to mind then is why do people then stay for such a long period within the same organisation and in some cases the same role? It could be said to be a comfort zone or could be traced to an innate interest and passion in continuing to actively creating change. Or it can be traced to a firm belief in the 'cause' and mission of the host organisation and an existing atmosphere of family and camaraderie.

The latter is very evident with most APC staff that are respected by their peers both within and beyond the organisational walls of the APC. This cuts across the organisation, characterising it more as a community of like minds bound together by a common background, interests, and passion for the organisation's mission and goals.

> *'…you have to understand the culture of the APC team. We're all get along really well and we're like a family more than colleagues…it is a great organisation to work for' (Bhyat, 2009)*

> *'…it is a lot of work but everyone is committed activist and I really do love it…' (Radloff, 2009)*

Of interest for future research would be how this 'family orientation' is perceived by externals such as NPOs, partners and donors, and how this perception influences their relations with the effectiveness of the APC as an organisation.

4.6.2 Systems and procedures

As identified in the earlier section of this chapter on people, governance and systems, the APC is made up four distinct but intertwined parts: the council, board of directors, staff (permanent, consultants, writers, translators, editors, volunteers, interns etc.) and

members. There exists a tiered and structured management system, but it is loosely formed and does not operate in a top-down manner. This is evidenced by the way projects are identified and allowed to operate with some autonomy, having gone through the basic checklist of fitting within the overall strategy and meeting the approval of the council and the board.

4.6.2.1 Project identification

The APC has a relatively sophisticated project identification, selection and implementation process. The APC is not a traditional grant-making organisation, but in identifying, bidding for and developing donor funded projects, network members are selected on specific guidelines to be a part of implementing the project/programme. They have a well-articulated process manual for most, if not all, of the aspects necessary to fulfil their project vision and missions. These are readily available to 'APC people' via its virtual platforms. These give guidance for project identification for viability, project implementation, and in particular, reporting and evaluation.

A good example is the SA broadband strategy, APC WNSP and projects driven by events in the relevant ICT policy arena. Again, the major criteria are that it fits within the strategy as agreed by council, signed off on by the board, and to be implemented by the staff.

> *'…the APC has worked in three-year strategic thematic cycles by consulting with members, funders, partners and based on sector trends and needs. The key focus is to work with social justice and development…' (Esterhuysen, 2009)*

4.6.2.2 Decision-making

This links to a prevailing characteristic that projects are just not identified or suggested by management, but can come from any part of the network. It emerges that a lot of preliminary discussion and work is done in the early stages prior to the projects being tabled for discussion, either to the board or the council. All projects and programmes identified during this study were preceded in one form or the other, either by consultations with a wider community of practitioners via workshops and research or via internal identification and debates on their necessity.

> *' GEM...there was a problem with evaluating how effective ICTs were in really empowering women…WNSP wanted to know if our work was really changing women's lives for the better…and impacting positively on change in a positive sense…and we wanted to show that our work was really contributing to change…so we started looking at existing evaluation tools with a focus on gender but did not find one that specifically looked at evaluating gender and ICT projects which had a focus on women's empowerment. So we held a global workshop in Manila in 2001…and we discussed what we would need in order to develop, shape and build this tool [GEM], was it necessary, what were the components, what was existing knowledge, how to bring a feminist perspective etc…so the meeting identified the need to develop a tool – which happened and then we needed to test the tool, add to it, make sure it was relevant etc. So we took the basic tool and started hosting workshops in every region. We started in Africa in Zanzibar…these then went on and tested the tool through projects such as IS WICCE working with women in refugees camps in Uganda…and from there the tool is further developed, used it for training and advocacy and now it is in its 2nd phase with 4 areas of activities…'(Radloff, 2009)*

Interviewees repeatedly raised the difficulties faced with making decisions or reaching a consensus as a result of the dispersed nature of the organisation, which then directly

impacts turnaround time on deliverables and, in the longer-term, effectiveness goals.

'…organisation of work can be hard for planning, problem solving and decision making…' (Esterhuysen, 2009)

These difficulties directly impact on effectiveness as they delay the organisation's ability to deliver on its mandate. Southern NPOs would benefit from minimising, as much as is possible, hierarchy and distance between implementing staff and management teams who are not on the field.

4.6.2.3 Communities of practice

The relatively well-established systems and procedures within the APC are strongly backed by an APC tradition of establishing communities of practice around specific issues of a thematic or procedural nature. Each project has a network of people and organisations that drive its strategy, mission and goals, as each team within the organisation also does. Therefore online offices or web spaces exist for the events team, finance team and project management team, amongst others.

'We have a finance web space…the finance systems is how we manage payments to suppliers/partners…all out staff have access and we have security and check and balance system that ensures that payments are processed within an audited and management and approval layer.' (Bhyat, 2009)

An example of such a community of practice is the GEM community, which has its own portal, as well as the SA broadband strategy which has an active group presence on the popular social networking site Facebook as well as collaborative research portals like Sotero.

'Sotero is used to share useful websites and to reference as well…in our erotics and mdg3 projects we can collaboratively build knowledge around the topics and share websites, reference easily etc.' (Radloff, 2009)

These communities of practice serve as living and accessible founts of historical lessons that can and do guide strategy.

Where such communities are well managed and their interactions documented and shared, they serve the organisation long beyond their active existence.

4.6.2.4 Learning organisation

The APC has deep roots in research prior to implementation. Its policy advocacy work is strengthened by knowledge garnered from real life lessons, based on real life issues and needs as identified via the work carried out by network members.

> *'…we have work flow [as finance] for any event…actual payment would be managed on the financial system web space…once the event is over I then do a report based on actual financial information which is from the accounting system and we match things up…the reports etc would be communicated over email and when finalised captured to PM spaces.' (Bhyat, 2009)*

> *'When a strategy work {sic} it is examined and tested to see if it can work in other environments and then where adapted the team works together to see it through.' (Primo, 2009)*

These findings also help shape the strategic direction of the APC as an organisation and a network of organisations. It is also evident that the APC, on an ongoing basis, initiates and opens itself up to a lot of reflection and evaluation on its organisational processes, programmes and activities. These directly influence its growth in its capacity to be effective as a southern NPO.

4.6.3 Information and knowledge flow

It has been established in the literature section of this study that most NPOs, by the very nature of their hands-on projects, are gold mines of information and knowledge but they lack the skills and capacity to rightly manage and utilise this resource. For any organisation, networked and southern or not, if they cannot leverage their information and knowledge they have to become effective their growth, amongst other things such as accessibility being severely limited.

4.6.3.1 Knowledge portal

The APC has a highly developed and sophisticated information and knowledge-sharing platform on its website but then has a range of knowledge 'products' – both for internal and external consumption.

> *'People feel well informed and have emails/documents to refer to online where they need to verify…this enhances transparency and accessibility…' (Esterhuysen, 2009)*

The APC website is a compendium of all its programmes and activities and serves as a community portal for its members, has live streaming via Twitter on what its people are engaged in; and has a news section where up to date information can be accessed, amongst a range of other functions and capabilities.

> *'We have a public website which is how we mostly communicate with the outside world. Our web space also has a logged in space for members and staff where we share various bits of information that non-members (the public world at large) is not able to access.' (Bhyat, 2009)*

> *'...[we are] always trying to make sure that we [and others] could make*

information as accessible as we could – one of the foundations of our work …' (Radloff, 2009)

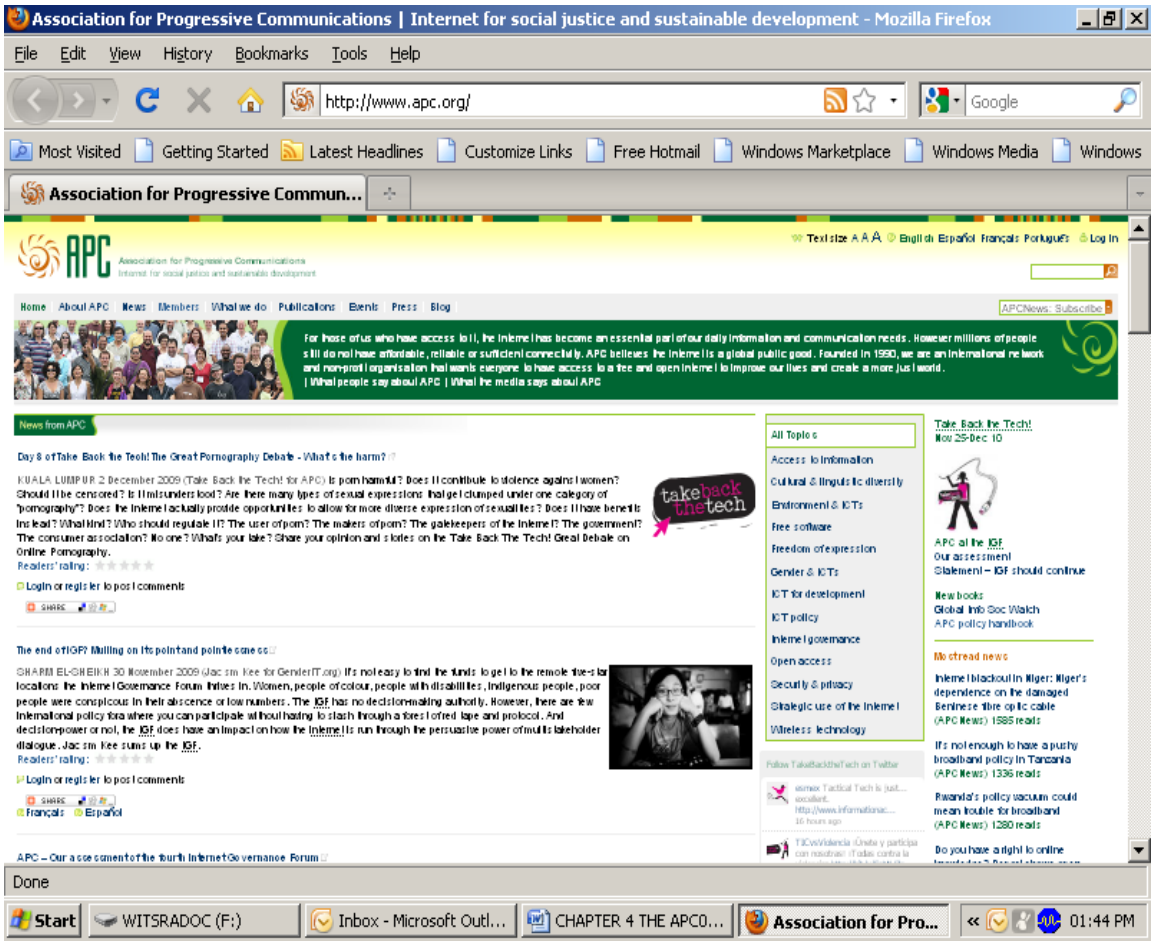

Figure 4.2 APC website

4.6.3.2 Web 2.0

The organisation is very techno-centric and there is a prevailing culture of thinking 'what technology can we use' prior to seeking solutions in other spheres. These technologies are used for reporting (financial and descriptive), project meetings, planning, administration, trainings and communications. Traditional technologies such

as e-mail, telephones and web portals are used, as well as Web 2.0 tools such as social networks, blogs, wikis, instant messaging services including Yahoo and Skype, video conferencing, and virtual learning forums which are constantly leveraged for meetings, project management and wider collaboration. The communities of practice referred to in the previous section all exist in virtual spaces using technologies with little or no face-to-face meetings beyond those arranged around related project events.

Information on projects and activities is shared on a weekly basis via an internal social network called 'NING' and via e-mail. On both platforms users share the details of the work they will engage with in the week ahead, as well as share, to some extent, personal stories and/or what they are going through.

> *'We communicate quite a bit with email. We have a NING space for check-ins and general idea sharing amongst staff. We have a project management web space where projects are tracked. We have a public website…' (Bhyat, 2009)*

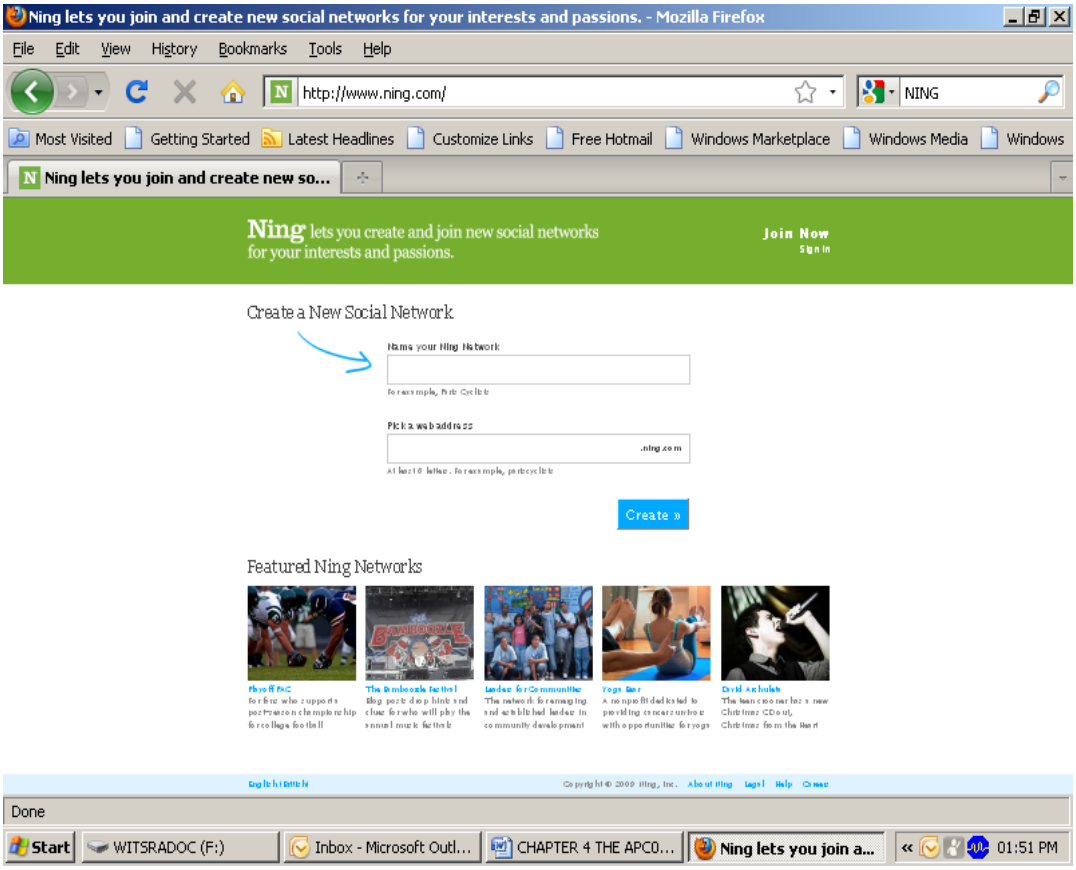

Figure 4.3 NING social networking platform

> *'NING is not been in use for very long within APC…I think it's about four months now or thereabouts…we used to do our check ins via the APC team mailing list… so I check in each week… [it] is about sharing what we have done at a personal level as well as what our plans are for the week work wise…' (Bhyat, 2009)*

> *'on the level of what we are doing on a day to day basis, we have regular check-ins via email to say what the week holds for us and what our travels are like and what we need from each other' (Radloff, 2009)*

These new generation technologies serve not only a work-related function but are also

used by the APC team to share their personal stories and life outside of work. This in itself lends to better understanding amongst co-workers when knowledge exists on the 'spaces' individuals are in and what they are going through.

4.6.3.3 Knowledge products

With regards to the generation of information and sharing of knowledge, the APC has a plethora of knowledge products ranging from publications, newsletters, monitors, and research papers, as well as opinion pieces, which all serve the purpose of getting the word out on policy issues related to the overall strategy of the organisation. Content for these is sourced from personal musings on thematic issues, as is the case for the SA Broadband Strategy project to research-based policy engagements like the Africa ICT policy monitor and the Gender monitor. Sharing of information and learning across projects also occurs, as is the case between the GENARDIS project and the GEM tool which is used as part of its planning and evaluation.

> *'[APC] administers round 2 and 3 and we have now grown the project a lot, we have capacity building workshop, we are growing a GENARDIS community interested in issues of gender and ICTs in rural and agricultural projects. It has many spin offs and we train in gem every round …and that is what is so good about the work – we can see connections and make those and benefit both!!' (Radloff, 2009)*

> *'There is a lot of collaboration across projects and usually cuts across multiple countries…lessons learnt from each campaign is drawn and fed into each other as part of learning' (Primo, 2009)*

This cross-fertilisation between projects and activities via an internal knowledge-sharing strategy directly impacts on the effectiveness of new projects delivered. Lessons learned form past projects are directly implemented in new projects, such that improvements are an ongoing factor in delivery.

4.6.4 Stakeholder relations

4.6.4.1 Engagement

The APC has a wide range of stakeholders, ranging from the network members to partners on projects, policy makers and the private sector.

> *'[Our] members are not only drawn from civil society but also private sector and guided by the principle to respect and create opportunities for our members'. (Esterhuysen, 2009)*

The most engagement is with policy makers, funders/donors and the network of ICT for social change practitioners who inform its mission and visions and who form communities of practice, generating and sharing information using the technological means identified earlier.

> *'[APC] WNSP for example has women that might be involved in the TBTT (16 days of activism campaign) and they don't have to be APC members, staff or partners…it could be any woman wanting to share an experience[but they have access to these specific project space]. Also APC often has project partners and they'll feed into these separate spaces as well. For example we had the broadband campaign in SA in April/May – APC was part of a coalition and so various stakeholders were involved and fed information to this area.' (Bhyat, 2009)*

The APC, as a network, used to have annual face-to-face gatherings, but constrained by funding this has been changed to every two years and usually piggybacks on a major event. Due to the nature of its work the APC has a strategy of engaging with both civil society and government in its quest to achieve its goals of social change in the ICT sphere.

'Our members are not only drawn from civil society but also private sector guided by the principle to respect and create opportunities for its members' (Esterhuysen, 2009)

To feed its myriad knowledge products and substantiate its policy advocacy, the APC has as its priority ongoing engagements with practitioners on the ground who then feed via research, into its policy advice and which in turn further develops the knowledge base of its partners and participants in such projects.

'…as I was working at the African Gender Institute, membership of WNSP really helped my work on the continent as a feminist activist and as an information activist.' (Radloff, 2009)

4.6.4.2 Donor relations

The APC has as its core donor partners the IDRC and a range of project-related partners and donors including Hivos, Ford Foundation, Open Society Institute, IDRC amongst others. These relationships extend beyond the projects and are all established and maintained via personal connections. This does not always augur well for the project, as is the case with tension arising when donor relationships' lines blur and become a lot more hands-on than is necessary, thus hindering project implementation, as Willard (2008) indicates in her report on the APC-IDRC relationship.

4.7. Reflections and analytical overview

The findings above shed light on the APC as an organisation that has an active learning culture and a community orientation in an organisational setting as opposed to a traditional work environment. Its active range of knowledge products delivered with the aid of new technologies, and its project delivery, all play a crucial part in its goal of

being effective. Its governance, a system loosely guiding information and knowledge flow, people capacity, procedures and relations with its stakeholders all directly influence and contribute to its effectiveness as a networked southern NPO creating social change. These findings corroborate the research framework, and add the APC branded elements in what can be termed the 'APC KM for effective social change framework'.

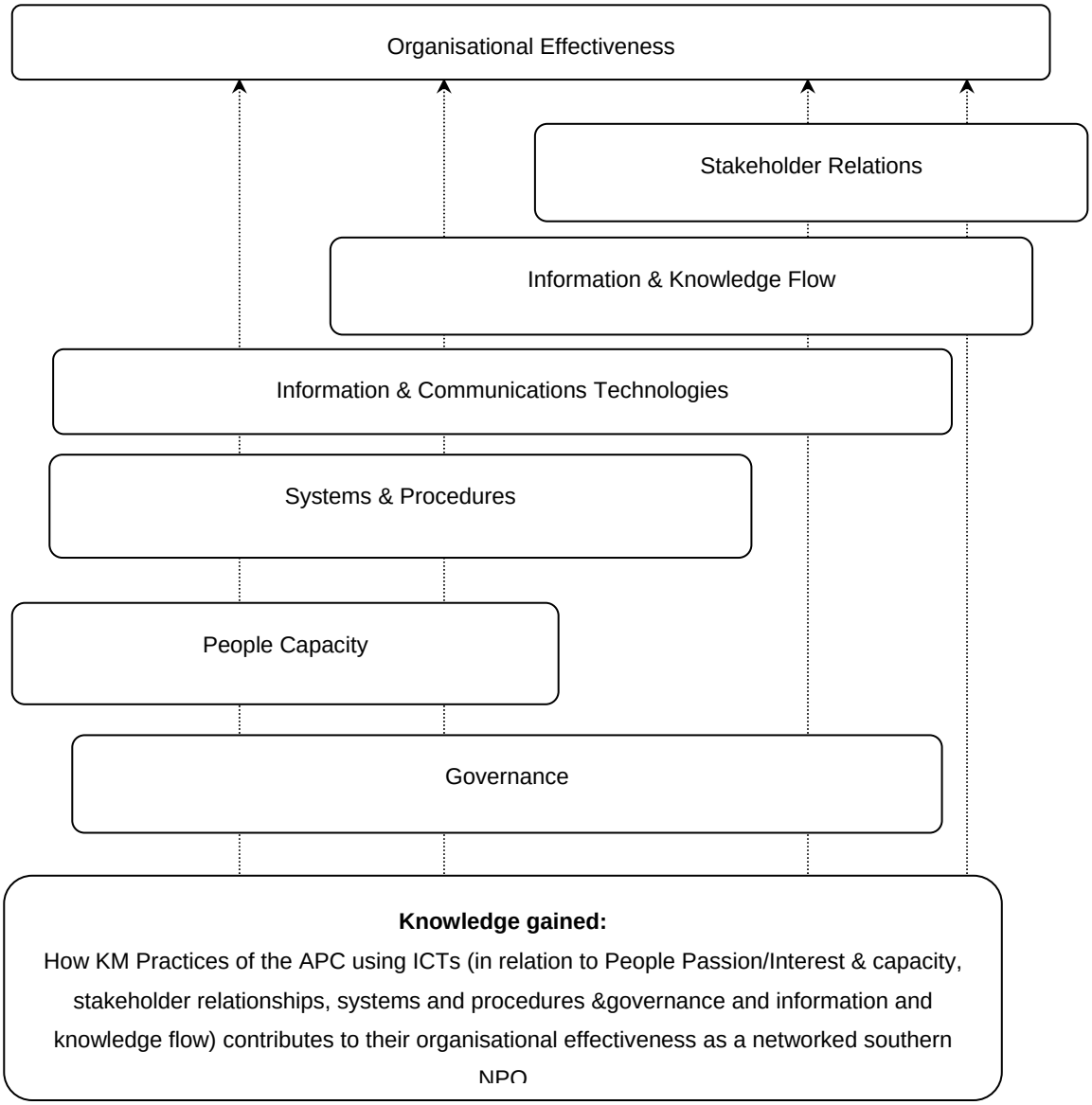

Figure 4.4 Lessons from APC – input to KM framework for southern NPO effectiveness

(Source: Akinsanmi, 2010)

CHAPTER 5. SUPPORTING/FACILITATING SOCIAL CHANGE: SANGONeT

5.1. Introduction

SANGONeT is one of a few southern non-profit organisations that play a facilitative role in the social change continuum by creating, aggregating and sharing information and knowledge of relevance to a range of non-profit organisations, both within the African region and beyond. The knowledge fields range from health, human rights, NGO management and technology through to economic justice. This gave the research a veritable ripe platform to examine both their internal and external knowledge management practices which directly or indirectly impact on their effectiveness as an organisation.

This chapter presents the research findings on how SANGONet uses KM practices in playing its facilitative role in social change. It examines the particular KM practices in relation to key concepts identified in the framework guiding this study. The discussion begins with a brief look at the SANGONet's origins, its evolution from a pioneer provider of access to the Internet and related technologies, through to its emergence as a facilitator of information and knowledge to the development sector in Southern Africa.

Within each section, an examination of key KM engagements is presented, followed by an analysis of findings that add to the discourse on the relationship between KM practices of southern NPOs and their effectiveness. The chapter concludes with a brief on the lessons from the SANGONeT case study for improving the effectiveness of southern NPOs through the practice of knowledge management.

5.2. Methodology and limitations

The data for this research was gathered via extensive document, publications and website review and via information as provided by SANGONeT, as well as from key informant interviews. Five interviews were conducted through e-mails, Skype-based interviews, e-mail questionnaires, face-to-face and telephonic interviews.

SANGONeT had a number of relatively new staff (not a part of the management team and with less than 18 month's experience within the organisation) who were unable to provide data over an extensive period of time that would help elicit information on existing and/or established practices within the organisation. This was a major limitation in the number of available respondents for this case study.

Other limitations ranged from unavailability of respondents due to family commitments, busy schedules and reluctance to utilise instant messaging technologies on the part of one respondent. Also, it should be noted that that most, if not all, respondents, due to their passion for their work, tended to respond idealistically and not always commensurate with reality that the evidence before the researcher indicated. Finally, it should be noted that due to the scope of this study the actual impact of the various projects and activities has not been verified and thus gives room for further research on this topic.

5.2.1 History of SANGONeT

To adequately narrate the historic origins of SANGONeT[14] one cannot but touch on its

[14] This section draws directly from the historical recount given on http://www.ngopulse.org/node/6311/og-panel/2 and its publication called The SANGONet Story.

roots as a trade union organisation in apartheid South Africa when it was known as WorkNet.

It was founded in 1987 and over three decades has evolved from a traditional trade union organisation to a technology provider becoming a facilitator of knowledge with an evolving history closely linked to the social and political changes experienced by South Africa. This history is best told in the words of a founding technologist with SANGONeT:

> *'I'm writing this while on a visit to London, and living very close to the suburb where, some 20 years ago, the idea of establishing an electronic mailing system in South Africa was born. I'm working off a very small laptop with 1 GB of memory and a fast, broadband wireless connection to the Internet. The machine I had then was a 'luggable' suitcase size 'portable', with two floppy disks, 64kb of memory and an external modem which needed to be connected via manual dial-up into the proto Internet. Technical support came from Antenna, a Dutch-based group of anti-apartheid activists led by Michael Polman. They had developed an e-mail system and delivered it to me on two floppy disks literally hours before*
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> *I travelled back to Johannesburg after a stint at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex. Back in Johannesburg a motley crew of union, civic and church activists joined forces with some progressive computer boffins (don't know if the word IT was around in those days), and WorkNet was born. Managed by Simone Shall, it occupied a single desk in the Jeppe Street offices of the Labour and Economic Research Centre (LERC), and was designed as an e-mail service aimed primarily at the black trade union movement. Another strong supporter at the time was Jim Catterson at the International Chemical Workers Union (ICWU). The ICWU had also been bitten by the bug, and understood the potential of electronic communications.*

The trade unions turned out not to be our strongest users. Indeed, journalists associated with the Weekly Mail (now the Mail & Guardian) made most use of the ability to submit stories electronically from anywhere in the country. The Mail & Guardian was to become one of the strongest advocates of electronic publishing, and was, under Irwin Manoim's hand, a willing partner in the WorkNet experience.

Soon we had about 600 users around the country, making WorkNet - at that stage (1987) before Internet Solutions was around - South Africa's largest e-mail service provider. Given the nature of the users - most of them connected to the anti-apartheid movement - downtime was as often a result of security police interference as it was of Telkom incompetence. At least one of these features has changed.

Our next big evolution was providing a link between progressive NGOs in particular parts of Africa, and international counterparts. It was easier and cheaper for Kenyans and Zimbabweans (the heaviest users) to phone into Johannesburg, and let us relay the mail to London for onward transmission to its final destinations. Under Anriette Esterhuysen's guidance, WorkNet kept pace with the times by evolving into SANGONet. Competition from newly established and far better resourced commercial providers made it increasingly difficult both from a technical and a financial point of view to provide only an e-mail service. Increasingly we moved from being a provider of contact via e-mail, to an information service provider with a focus on development.' (Taffy Adler, 25 March 2007)

It is important to note that from its beginnings this southern non-profit organisation has been rooted in, and governed by, the organisations and communities it aimed to serve. During the 1980s, South Africa's labour movement played a key role in the struggle against apartheid. This work with South African unions brought the organisations at the forefront of coordinating activities (in particular the Labour and Economic Research

Centre (LERC)) face-to-face with the need for safe and effective modes of information and knowledge sharing and communication.

In early 1988, LERC convened a steering group, which birthed WorkNet. At the same time, through its links with the labour movement in the United Kingdom, LERC made contact with the Labour Telematics Centre (LTC) in Manchester, England. LTC consisted of Manchester Host, Soft Solution and Poptel, together with the Workers' Education Authority and the trade union college based in Manchester.

Through their connection with LERC and other international networks, these organisations became closely involved in WorkNet. It offered services that ranged from basic e-mail and bulletin boards in the late 1980s to online discussion and content services in the early 1990s. The 600 strong active users of WorkNet in the late '80s and early '90s were journalists and political activists from these organisations as well as individuals who needed, on an ongoing basis, a quick and easy way to get information in and out of the country. This reinforced the need for, and pioneering use of, emerging electronic communications tools and served as the foundation for the emergence of SANGONeT as a facilitator of information and communications in a major social change era in South Africa.

In 1993, WorkNet changed its name to SANGONeT in response to the changing profile of its users, which had moved from activist and journalists fighting for the end to apartheid rule to mostly NGOs, and its growing links with development organisations throughout the Southern Africa region.

> *"SANGONeT was the first public organisation to move online [in 1994] just before Internet Solutions went live with its Internet and web-based e-mail solutions." (Fatima Bhyat, 2007)*

Prior to this, SANGONeT formed a partnership with the Development Resources Centre (DRC), an NGO established in 1991 to provide a platform for information and debate for South African organisations as they began to focus on reconstruction and development, rather than resistance. Through the DRC, SANGONeT established its two most significant and enduring partnerships with donor agencies: the Ford Foundation and the CS Mott Foundation.

Through support received from the Ford Foundation in 1993, SANGONeT was able to develop ICT training as a core service expanding the quality and variety of its training over the next decade and a half. WOMEN'SNET, an information and capacity-building initiative, by and for women, was also launched as a project within SANGONeT.

Today, SANGONeT exists as a southern non-profit organisation in Africa involved in the field of knowledge provision using information communication technologies (ICTs) with a particular focus on facilitating civil society access to a wide range of knowledge products and services. They also impact and contribute to sustainable development programmes by providing appropriate, relevant and affordable ICT solutions.

5.2.2 SANGONeT people, governance, programmes

SANGONeT defines itself as 'a strategic leadership organisation influencing social transformation where the impact and contribution of sustainable development programmes are supported by appropriate, relevant and affordable ICT solutions' (SANGONeT, 2009). This support is provided in the form of services and initiatives that support the effective use of ICTs in the delivery of projects and programmes of social change.

The facilitation of access to, and the sharing of, relevant information, as well as capacity building, awareness raising and connecting people to the right services and projects, is carried out on a daily basis within SANGONeT by a small core staff supported by a more traditional setup in comparison with the APC. This section speaks to the people behind the services and initiatives of SANGONeT and how the organisation is governed, including an overview of the various initiatives they have on offer. These are all examined through the lens of knowledge management and how, if at all, specific practices in SANGONeT result in the effective delivery of their core mission and goals.

5.2.2.1 People

Of the three southern NPOs studied, SANGONeT stands out in that it is the only organisation in the traditional sense of the word – that is, there is a separation of sections such as administration, finance, project and support staff as well as a hierarchy led by the executive director and the board. There are a total of 13 paid staff

members who ‘publish content, organise the annual SANGONeT conference, validate entries in a range of information directories, provide technical support to NGOs, and engage in various other organisational activities’ (SANGONeT, 2009).

A pool of consultants and volunteers, who are called upon when projects demand this, supports this core team. SANGONeT is also a member of the APC network and draws on the knowledge and strength that resides in the network’s people.

The staff team is led on a day-to-day basis by the management team made up of the executive director, the finance manager, the ICT services manager and the information services or ‘portal’ editor. These are tasked with shaping, directing and overseeing the implementation of the strategy of SANGONeT. The implementations team, whose primary tasks range from information sourcing, administration to community coordination, supports the management team.

The organisation is thus in three layers – the management team, the implementation team and the support services or administrative team. The communication lines, as identified during this study, show that the executive director works with the management team who in turn deals directly with project team, and the administrative team is in the loop only as it pertains to reporting or support tasks. Across various project teams there does not seem to be much interaction either. This is discussed in the findings section of this chapter.

5.2.2.2 Governance

SANGONeT has a history of a having board members[15] who in one-way or another

[15] SANGONet Board members: Tebogo Makgatho (Business Development Director, Torque-IT), Khehla Shubane (Independent Consultant), Mike Jensen (IT Consultant), Kgotso Schoeman (Chief Executive

have been, or are, an active part of the ICT industry; either within the southern Africa region or beyond. The board historically has played an advisory and oversight role to the development of the organisation's strategy as its highest governing structure. As a non-profit organisation, SANGONeT has no shareholders and its board of directors is the highest governing structure. Board meetings are held three times per year (Barnard, 2009).

Currently made up of five people, the board of directors serve as strategy advisers, guiding the work of the executive director and minimal involvement in the day-to-day implementation of project activities. They represent a range of sectorial views, ranging from being industry leaders in IT to being players in the financial sector.

> *'Board members represent expertise in a wide range of areas of key importance to the strategic focus and direction of SANGONeT, including finance, business, leadership, governance and IT.' (Barnard, 2009)*

Of interest in the governance and strategy identification of SANGONeT is a grouping it helped to found in 2006 called the CEO circle. At times, it is perceived as 'a project initiative' and serves as more of an advisory role. It was initiated to create a space within the leadership of the NGO sector in Gauteng (a South African province) to discuss common institutional and strategic development issues on a regular basis.

> *'Was initiated after conversation with Andrea Miller on creating space for CEO concerning a range of issues…2006/7 was the first CEO circle which was well received; Issue discussed usually ranges from legislation impacting the sector to service levies, fund raising et al…presents a good vibe place to get useful*

Officer, Kagiso Trust), Sipho Ndaba (Director of Information Risk Management, KPMG), David Barnard (Executive Director, SANGONet)

information' (Barnard, 2009)

5.3. SANGONeT programmes, projects and activities

Over the last two and a half decades of SANGONeT's existence it has changed from a guerrilla type organisation collecting and sharing information during the apartheid era to being a technology service provider and support system for a growing civil society to its present form of facilitating civil society's ICT use and providing relevant information.

The lessons learnt on how information can be shared are vital to the work of a range of non-profit organisations as its past roles have informed the strategy to focus on primarily being a knowledge and information-sharing organisation. Its activities for the past seven years have centred around four programme areas, which include civil society information, ICT services, and ICT advocacy and support services.

Civil society information is a service focused on sourcing, aggregating and sharing knowledge relevant to civil society in southern Africa, while its ICT services involve partnering to provide low cost technologies as well as playing the role of a trainer and supporter for those who then subscribe to their technology services. Its advocacy around ICTs is shaped by influencing policies on ICTs and the information society beyond southern Africa. Support services incorporate all financial management, human resource and office administration issues, and function under the leadership of the finance manager.

The first three programme areas have a range of projects and activities that have been implemented and are being rolled out over the last few years. These are discussed to some extent in the next section with a view to eliciting how they are conceptualised and rolled out, and what KM strategies are either consciously or unconsciously used.

5.3.1 Knowledge products and areas of activities

From inception, SANGONeT has conceptualised and implemented a range of ICT initiatives in support of the non-profit sector in southern Africa. These range from ICT discussion forums called 'Thetha's, to online information portal and SANGOTECH[16] which provide technology support to the non-profit sector. This section relays the story of NGO Pulse, Thetha's and the annual conference and exhibition.

5.3.1.1 SANGONeT NGO and development information portal: NGO Pulse[17]

SANGONeT, from inception, has in one way or another been a provider, aggregator and channel for information and knowledge. The NGO Pulse, a non-profit and development portal was launched in October 2005. It was first conceived and operated in 2003 as the Thusong portal, which was focused on providing information on donors, grants, funding and partnering opportunities. This was part of the outcomes of a consultation with South African civil society on the need for a central place to find relevant information on funding.

> *'Two big things, we were testing the waters with the study of Internet fund raising in South Africa. This led to the identification of the need and demand for information on funding {and} birthed the predecessor to NGO Pulse called Thusong Portal.' (Barnard, 2009)*

16 www.sangotech.org

17 www.ngopulse.org

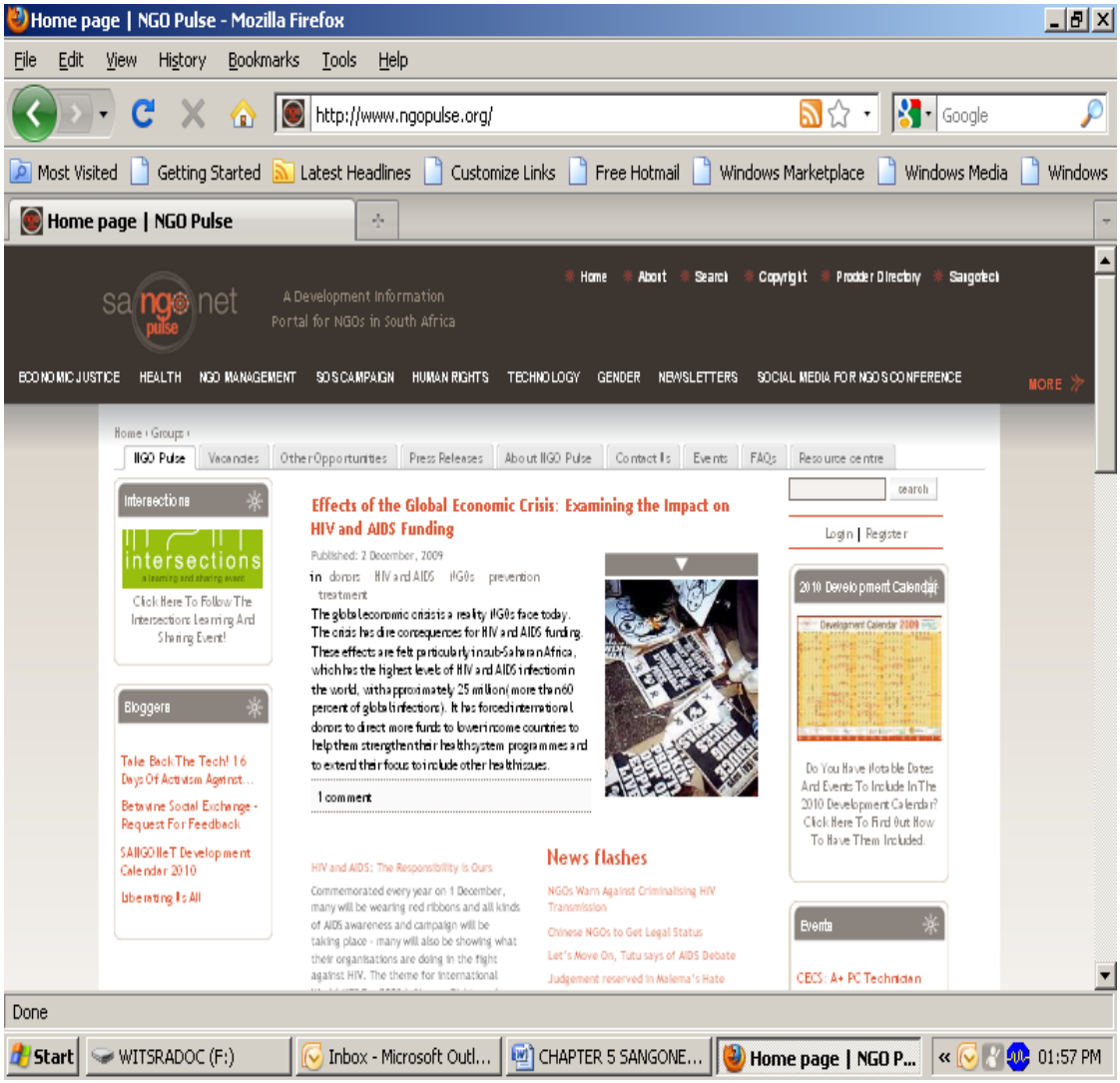

Figure 5.1 NGO Pulse - 'A development information portal for NGOs in South Africa'

The NGO Pulse is a gateway to the South African non-profit sector with up-to-date listings of NPOs in South Africa listed according to their areas of specialisation (called the Prodder NGO and Development Directory), as well as the weekly NGO Pulse e-newsletter called 'Intersections' which covers a range of thematic issues from economic justice to NGO management. The portal also has details on recent articles on ICT issues as well as a vacancy listing for the non-profit sector. It captures and

covers upcoming events, and has a bloggers section and a community section where feedback can be given and users can register their CVs. The NGO Pulse editor, who also doubles as the CSI programme area manager, manages this portal. A team of programme assistants, staff and roving writers contribute to the portal.

Subscribers can also send in articles and opinion pieces. The process of gathering and sharing this wide range of information is examined in the findings section of this chapter.

5.3.1.2 Thetha: The SANGONeT ICT discussion forum[18]

Thetha is an Nguni verb meaning talk, discuss, debate and share opinions/ideas. The first of these discussions convened by SANGONet was in March 2003 and it presented an opportunity for non-profit organisations to discuss ICT issues of common concern at both provincial and national levels.

> *'The idea of Thetha is based on what people are asking questions about…it was initiated to fill a gap for a space for NGOs to address ICT policy issue…NGOs/CS/multi-stakeholders to talk about issues of common concern; to align events to issues or to kick start such processes which are influenced by the economic processes' (Barnard, 2009).*

18 www.SANGONet.org.za/thetha.

The first Thetha forums were focused around the world summit on the information society in particular, and really helped to inform and shape the engagement of South African civil society in the global policy process.

> *'Advocacy became more than an afterthought with the Thetha forums which presented CSOs … an opportunity to talk about ICT related issues … WSIS was a guideline and leverage; direct outcomes of the discussions fed into the process of WSIS as South African civil society CS contribution...' (Barnard, 2009).*

These Thetha forums contributed to the increased awareness and understanding among civil society about ICT policy and application issues relevant to their work, as well as national and regional development processes. They were also an opportunity to develop local capacity and inform future ICT and related policies, and stimulate new ICT investment and development interventions.

The overall objectives of the regional Thetha project are to raise awareness and inform a wide range of national, regional and international stakeholders about the expected ICT challenges and opportunities peculiar to the region. In its first phase over 20 of these Thetha forums were organised in South Africa prior to its sub-regional rollout to the rest of southern Africa. Based on SANGONeT's experience during the first few years of implementing the Thetha project, and the specific outcomes of the pilot regional project, SANGONet, OSISA[19] and the Finnish Embassy agreed to expand the project to a further five Southern African countries.

Informed by in-country research interventions, public consultations, Thetha forums and

[19] The Open Society Institute for Southern Africa www.osisa.org.

cross-country analyses, the Thetha phase two, which began in 2006, provides an important regional platform in support of developing a comprehensive understanding of the specific ICT priorities and developments which will inform the ICT4D process in the southern African region in the next 10 years.

The objective is to develop a comprehensive understanding of regional ICT4D issues through in-country research processes, stakeholder consultations, discussions of these findings on a country level through Thetha forums, building local capacity to engage with these issues in an informed and strategic manner, and ultimately, in the post-project phase, inform local and regional ICT decision-making and development planning processes.

These Thetha forums continue to serve as a feedback mechanism, which then informs the strategic direction of SANGONeT's other projects such as the ICT services programme area, which is a response to technology needs identified within the non-profit sector in southern Africa.

5.3.1.3 SANGONeT's Annual ICTs for Civil Society Conference & Exhibition: Mobile Active 08[20]

This annual event, first held in March 2005, is recognition of the importance face-to-face and offline engagement plays in the social change process. Its precursor, in the words of the executive director of SANGONet, was the Thetha forums, which played the dual role of capacity building, awareness raising and opinion gathering for the world summit on the information society process between 2003 and 2005.

[20] www.mobileactive08.org

'First annual SANGONet conference recognised that engaging people offline is as important to address the existing issues; the precursor was Thetha which is now a regional project; it plays facilitative role for other events/organisations…' (Barnard, 2009)

As at the time of this study the last conference, tagged 'Mobile Active 08', had generated quite a buzz in the non-profit sector with its innovative approach to awareness raising, information sharing and community building among participants.

Mobile Active 2008 emerged out of a conversation between the executive director of SANGONet and the founder of Mobile Active based in the United States. It began as recognition of the increasing strategic role mobile phones play in aiding, facilitating and creating social change across Africa.

It was agreed to bring together people from across the world actively using the mobile platform in their social change work. This resulted in a series of brainstorming sessions across borders using a range of technologies from Skype to telephones, and face-to-face meetings to plan and implement the session. Form-wise, it was agreed it would be more of a facilitated learning forum rather than the traditional conference sessions.

This facilitated learning, networking model meant a high volume of information, and knowledge was generated, captured and shared in real time via Blogs, live feeds and instantaneous reporting by media. This did not translate into new learning *per se* for the organisation as the SANGONet executive director indicated in interviews. Of note for future research would be to explore how much learning took place for individuals and organisations in comparison with learning's for the non-profit organisations who put the meeting together.

5.4. Research findings

The SANGONeT data collection process presented a different set of dynamics from the APC study in that it is more of a traditional organisation, not necessarily structured or operated like other southern NPOs as identified in the first chapter of this study. It is also important to note that though the organisation is much more structured (people and work delivery) with twelve offices in South Africa, it had very little staff availability in terms of sharing information and knowledge on the organisation and its workings. This was because of time availability as well as the non-response from people within the organisation.

Respondents included members of the board, the management team and past staff members and/or consultants. These gave a range of views on how they perceived the knowledge management practices of the organisation by telling the stories of the projects and initiatives they either managed or had been involved with in one way or another. This section delves into a range of findings relevant to this study of knowledge management practices, which influence and contribute to SANGONeT's effectiveness as a southern non-profit organisation facilitating social change.

5.4.1 People capacity

This section explores how SANGONet 'people' in one way or another directly influence its ability to deliver on its mandate as a facilitator of social change by examining their role delivery, commitments, interactions across, within and beyond the organisation.

5.4.1.1 Personal commitment/interest/passion

During the course of this study, the majority of respondents were driven by an internal and very personal belief in the cause to which they have committed their lives. It was less of a job and more of life style – an activist trend that dates from having been

involved in changing the course of perceived and real injustice in their earlier years.

> *'I joined SANGONet in April 2008 due to {my} interest in providing content and as a knowledge brokering organisation and because of their smart use of technology' (Moolman, 2009)*

Within SANGONet, there was no indication that commitment to the fulfilment of the mission of the organisation (facilitating social change) was driven either by monetary gain or because of specific qualifications they had. It was more of having recognised that the goal was 'for the greater good' and to help in 'making the world a better place', which requires personal commitment to achieve effective and sustainable growth.

> *'We are working in an environment which requires dynamic/energetic people to remain sustainable.' (Barnard, 2009)*

This has a downside in that it means not much interest is taken in terms of a multifaceted southern non-profit like SANGONet which covers a spectrum of developmental issues.

> *'I must confess I have no adequate knowledge of the SANGONet history, but I do know it has some negative and positive aspects and my interests lie with particular aspects that relate to my work' (Moolman, 2009)*

A personal interest and commitment will strengthen the drive to find relevant information, and in most cases, share and grow such a body of knowledge.

5.4.1.2 Multiple roles, multiple sources of knowledge

Non-profit organisations, either based in the global north or south, tend to have staff who perform more than one function; or in other words, go beyond the terms set out in their 'official role'. SANGONet did not differ from this trend in that it had two prominent staff within the management team who served more than one function. The main example is the CSI programme manager who doubles as the portal editor.

> *'I manage CSI and the Portal Editor for NGO Pulse. Within CSI is the SN announce, eNewsletter, Special projects and Citizen Journalism project. I am involved with organisational planning; thinking and planning conferences and road shows; delivery on project goals; management of team; performance appraisals; day to day running of projects… as editor I manage the team, content planning, thematic areas and develop relationships with content partners' (Moolman, 2009)*

This staff member not only works part-time for SANGONet but also has a paid position within the APC and a consulting role with Women'sNet. This was unknown to the researcher as at the time; the specific cases were being identified and in conversations with the leadership of the organisation, it emerged that this cross-organisational role

was under review.

> *'…Multiple roles across organisations {is} not necessarily endorsed but it's under observation with possible room for review at the end of the year…' (Barnard, 2009)*

No evidence was sought or found during the course of this study that this multi-functional role across organisations jeopardised integrity – on the positive side of the spectrum, it reinforced the growing culture of information and knowledge sharing across non-profit organisations. Evidence of knowledge sharing across projects managed by the staff member was also seen with information gathered for the information portal helping to further shape and define the CSI engagements and vice versa.

> *'The CSI program is strategic in using the portal to support civil society, {address} issues {such as} how to increase participation; offering potential content partners (packages)... {also how to} integrate the Prodder directory and the SANGONet (SN) announce product on how can it be used more strategically' (Moolman, 2009)*

An ability to share information across projects and activities means knowledge can also be shared but where its not managed or implemented with clearly defined strategies it might result in a muddling of project goals.

5.4.1.3 Succession planning

The executive director also has the dual role of organisational lead and deputy. A large amount of knowledge and decision-making resides within the personality and office of the executive director. This has both a positive and negative effect on the running and implementation of programmes.

‘I have no deputy executive director…a lot of history and knowledge resides within {my role}’ (Barnard, 2009)

The role of deputy executive director had been staffed at a certain point in time but then was made redundant as there was no visible growth pattern beyond the role. Where the executive director is unavailable or away, the organisational responsibilities that he only can sign off are delayed. On the positive side though, having occupied this role for a decade a lot of tacit knowledge is retained within the organisation and can be readily accessed when needed. This was evident in the interviews conducted, as a lot of the history was available to the researcher first hand.

Knowledge of where and how an organisation has evolved is pertinent to its ability to shape and direct its efforts towards being more effective.

5.4.1.4 Team dynamics: cross fertilisation (or lack of)

In any organisation in the private, public or civil sector there has always been, and will always be, dynamics specific to and driven by the nature of work being carried out as well as the personalities of the individuals within these organisations. As identified earlier, personal convictions or interests play a major role in the delivery of specific tasks within this southern non-profit organisation. This personal commitment and/or interested do not necessarily carry through to an interaction across project and activity areas within the organisation.

First is that even though synergy exists between project leads this does not necessarily carry through when it comes to team members.

> *'Synergy exists between CSI and SANGOTECH but not within the team members necessarily…' (Moolman, 2009)*

Within SANGONet, this lack of 'understanding' across units is most evident between the administrative and programmatic units, while across team members it carries through between core 'techie' staff and those whose primary concerns are issues of societal development. As explained by a unit leader:

CSI staff has higher levels of education, which aids in the conceptual process and content and knowledge production. It requires an understanding of programmatically driven work.' (Moolman, 2009)

'Staff is hired in relation to projects which in turn are driven by funding.' (Barnard, 2009)

In as much as the explanation given by the unit lead above could be the cause, it should be noted that the technology team is made up of consultants. These are brought in on a need only basis and as such are not entrenched or integrated within the fabric of the organisation as the rest of the programmatic team members are. Where there is a standardised KM strategy for information and knowledge sharing, non-permanent staff has a central resource to help guide their work as well as help them integrate as much as possible in the time they have within the organisation (either as consultants or volunteers).

5.4.1.5 People development

No evidence was found for an outlined staff development strategy, either to improve their capacity to deliver on the job or widen the scope of their skills set. A minute evidence of *ad-hoc* training via attendance of partner programmes exists as well as encouragement (tacit) of staff pursuing personal development beyond the organisation.

'We have no defined training or skills improvement strategy…staff development is encouraged and all play reporting roles as they are encouraged to do what they have an interest in which helps people management' (Anonymous, 2009)

A lack of capacity building strategy, formal or informal, within the organisation directly impacts on the morale of its people and reflects in their ability to grow or utilise knowledge that they generate from their work. In some exceptional cases where an individual is driven and equips him or herself, the organisation might remain unaware

of this resource, which could potentially increase its ability to deliver on its mandate.

5.4.2 Systems and procedures

5.4.2.1 Structured/hierarchical organisation

SANGONet is a hierarchical organisation with defined lines of separation between the management team and the rest of the staff. Communication also occurs based on this hierarchy. No evidence was found of participatory governance or input made by staff members in the day-to-day governing and shaping of the organisation's strategy beyond the traditional management strategies used in hierarchical organisations.

> *'{The} organisational strategy {is} determined by Board with input of management team and also based on prevailing and identified issue areas from request coming in from network of subscriber, CEO forum etc' (Barnard, 2009)*

> ***'**They have an organisational approach to programs rather than vice versa..' (Moolman, 2009)*

> *'Project planning process is largely followed {with} actual implementation and reporting as it occurs very well detailed…' (Anonymous, 2009)*

It was noted that project staff have some autonomy in identifying activity related to existing projects, which they pursue, but only after approval has been received from the management team and evidence can be found of its relevance to the core strategy of the organisation. This has directly influenced SANGONeT's ability to remain 'true' to delivering its core mandate of facilitating social change. This in some way hampers creative thinking and the harnessing of opportunities as identified by implementation staff.

5.4.2.2 Synergies

Within any organisation, either in the public or private domain, an established set of 'How To's' are in place to guide its operations. In the non-profit sector in general this is not always the case, or where it exists it cannot be clearly identified in specific procedural documents or clearly articulated by its people. SANGONet, as a more structured southern non-profit organisation with a clearly delineated hierarchy, has evidence of procedural systems in place, particularly with finding, managing and sharing knowledge with its external audience. Internally, based on programmatic and activity areas, a clear system of project identification and adoption also exists but no evidence was found of cross-fertilisation procedures across operational areas.

> *'…reached a stage when she joined that the organisation had begun to think openly about the programs it was involved with including working on the new NGO Pulse portal' (Moolman, 2009)*

This directly impacts on the understanding of how and why things are at times delayed or labelled as 'urgent' between programme areas and the operational sector of the organisation.

> *'… programmatic synergy exists across departments but not with operations (finance manager needs to be more integrated or work better with the rest of the team); such synergies are personality driven (a grasp of the organisation and its activities would make working together easier…)' (Moolman, 2009)*

Beyond the non-profit organisation, external synergies also play a key role in SANGONet's ability to deliver on its core mandate of facilitating social change across southern Africa. This is evident in its relationship with donors, networks like the APC, and established relationships with the private and public sectors, evident in the make up of its board.

5.4.2.3 Learning organisation

Evidence was found that SANGONet is, and has always been, an organisation that learns from its activities and from other organisations and the community around it. SANGONet has demonstrated a growing level of a willingness to learn and adapt to remain effective and relevant in its locale. This is evident from its growing from an activist organisation with a strong trade union background providing e-mail, and leveraging religious and advocacy networks to its transition from WORKNet (1991) to SANGONet (1991), due to the prevailing economic and social situation in South Africa.

> *'Even though an NGO it was a pioneer in the introduction of ICT into the SA civil society space. It lays claim to being one of the first ISPs in the country; fairly significant in the SA Civil Society context by introducing ICTs/Technology to the CS space; and its mission and goal is still consistent with the original plans but more refined and consistent…' (Barnard, 2009)*

During these transitions, SANGONet moved from being a service provider with members to an information content provider and on to a knowledge broker for the non-profit sector in southern Africa.

Its knowledge portal, NGO Pulse, is designed to facilitate quick access to relevant knowledge based on themes with attribution to sources well earmarked. It also allows readers and subscribers to contribute their views and share resources in a collaborative format.

> *'… transformed from a member based ISP to a different from being a content/information/knowledge provider for southern Africa over ten years with a growing subscriber base…' (Barnard, 2009)*

5.4.2.4 Communities of practice

These subscribers and contributors form informal communities of practice around specific thematic areas and feature as regular commentators to information shared on the portal. Communities of practice also exist around the SANGONet monthly newsletter 'LWATI'. Both these communities of practice are not actively engaged in the traditional sense of the word but exist virtually, regularly pooling and sharing information.

> *'We have communities of practice not within the organisation but based on content needs of subscribers (largely to access information or services)…' (Anonymous, 2009)*

5.4.3 Information and knowledge flow

5.4.3.1 Communication, information and knowledge silos

Though a hierarchical organisation with defined roles and separating decision makers from implementers, SANGONet has relatively good communication channels between staff and senior management. This is evidenced in the rapport that exists between management team and their team members. This does not necessarily carry through across programmatic teams, and as one respondent indicated, could be as a result of the varying skills sets of the people.

> *'Synergy exists between CSI and SANGOTECH but not within the team members necessarily…CSI/Prodder is about content and conceptually driven while SANGOTECH/Prodder is process and systems driven…' (Anonymous, 2009)*

Where communication channels are blocked, not clarified or completely disrespected, it can lead to pertinent information or knowledge that would aid delivery not being shared. This can be because of a lack of motivation or a sense that even when heard it won't be utilised. As shown earlier, much tacit knowledge exists in pockets of the

organisation, residing in the minds of individuals.

This knowledge ranges from information on the beginnings of SANGONet to information on relevant partners and projects. No evidence was found of an internal knowledge management or information sharing strategy that allowed access to a range of individuals across the organisation. Information exists in silos and is given out on a need-to-know basis. It also emerged that an understanding of what other project teams do or are involved in does not cut across the organisation. In the words of a respondent:

> *'I don't know much known in terms of contribution to orgs of certain projects such as the CEO circle... I had same feeling with SANGOTECH but better understanding came after {I was a part of the} road shows…' (Anonymous, 2009)*

This lack of understanding of the organisation's workings from a member of the team, which even though might seem small and insignificant, could escalate to feelings of disconnection and misrepresentation which could impact commitment and ultimately the ability to deliver effectively. It leaves speaking on behalf of, or for, the organisation in the hands of the management only, and does not add to the sense of ownership of the mandate by implementation staff.

5.4.3.2 Web 2.0 technologies

With a project focused on the provision of ICT tools and services to meet the needs of the non-profit sector, SANGONet prides itself in its quick uptake and use of information and communications technologies in the delivery of its services.

Their most prominent use of technology is with the NGO Pulse and via the provision of technology services via SANGOTECH. Internally the organisation uses a range of new and old media to communicate and share information. They also are at the forefront of

exploring how new technologies with wide penetration rates can be used more effectively in the non-profit sector via the SANGOTECH initiative.

> *'SANGONeT made a key contribution to exposing NGOs to ICT issues and applications at a time when this knowledge was desperately needed. This enabled many Southern African NGOs with the ability to harness the power of ICTs to enhance their work on a day-to-day basis... Equally important, perhaps, is that SANGONet helped lay the foundation for NGOs and civil society more broadly to monitor the development of ICT policy and practice, and make a contribution to the global debates around the future role of ICTs in what is increasingly called the global Information Society. SANGONet also helped link the NGO sector, government and the ICT sector in relation to ICT issues which affects all sectors of society, at the macro (governance), meso (policy) and micro (delivery) levels' (Naidoo, 2007)*

An interesting characteristic observed during this study was that interviews were preferred face-to-face than either telephonically or via Internet based services like Skype.

This meant that when the respondent was unavailable at the same location but online they were neither comfortable nor open to responding. A number of interviews with key staff were not possible due to these restraints.

> *'…we are a technological organisation but operating in traditional mode – physical office, most things done face-to-face, not much use of technology, staff not dispersed though somewhat flexible working hours…' (Anonymous, 2009)*

5.4.4 Stakeholder relations

5.4.4.1 Governance

As earlier indicated in the governance section of this chapter, the board of directors for SANGONet play a significant role in the shaping of the strategic direction the organisation pursues. The board of directors also plays a visibly active role in organisational representation and positioning in high profile forums. They are also involved with fund raising efforts without impinging on, or being a part of, the day-to-day implementation. Having indicated that there is minimal direct contact between implementation staff and the board, it suffices to say that due to a detailed reporting process the board remains informed on what the organisation stands for and represents this adequately. Over the course of the three major shifts in organisational focus, the board has been at the forefront of reshaping the organisation to meet the market demands as they have observed in their work as experts in sectors directly related to SANGONeT's mandate.

> *'The board is uniquely positioned with two long-term board members; board has always been clued up on what is done but hands off in getting it done; balance between operations and governance (fiduciary responsibility and they are good on reputation management)…almost not enough presence on operations/output side' (Barnard, 2009).*

These strategies have not been implemented in isolation from the staff but at the same time neither have they been communicated effectively such that the resulting changes (retrenchments, staff cuts etc.) have left traces of tensions years later.

These transitions, and the resultant effect on delivery, are visible in the straining of the relationship with ISP subscribers in SANGONeT's early days as well as with its subscribers when it moved from a core IT non-profit organisation to a facilitator of knowledge and information.

> *'Late '90s early 2000s it was sitting with a million rands deficit and so had to revisit its model. At the Board meeting in March 2000 ISP business was phased out due to issues and also change and sophistication in the ISP market*

share; it was agreed that we should focus on the value adds…primary access was no longer main aspect of our work. With the introduction and implementation of the changes: retrenchments, call centre call off, dial up servers closed which meant NGOs and staff felt let down' (Barnard, 2009)

As at the time of this study, which coincided with an internal review, its role as the CSO knowledge provider for Southern Africa was being re-established.

5.4.4.2 Donor relations

Funders also play an active role in this non-profits ability to be effective – or not.

'…for Citizenship Journalism the right fit within organisation has not been found nor has an external personnel been found … so its subsumed within my role; …this project has been a lesson in how not to do things as PM is based within {funder} while implementation lies with SANGONet thus absence of information on budget etc as all resides within Hivos; it's a model not to be recommended' (Moolman, 2009)

This 'active' and or 'hands on' presence in the implementation of a project directly has an impact in SANGONeT's ability to deliver on the project's specific mandate without compromising its mission as an organisation or its delivery of other projects and activities.

5.4.4.3 Engagement

There has been active engagement with stakeholders over the life span of SANGONet. These stakeholders range from subscribers to members to donor partners, fellow southern non-profit organisations and contributors.

These engagements included serving as ICT providers and providing support services to being pioneer trainers on ICTs for development, as well as being knowledge providers and trendsetters. These stakeholders also serve as peer reviewers, as is the case with the CEO circle and CSO comments section on SANGONeT's knowledge products. Communication occurs using a variety of channels, including the knowledge portal, newsletters and via outward-faced research to identify needs and trends in the non-profit sector.

> *' {We engage} via attendance of events and activities within Johannesburg {mostly}; via email and telephone; content {is} gathered from these events; public face of the work is devolved involving all staff members leveraging their experience/strengths/interests and networks; new content and writers always sought…' (Moolman, 2009)*

Knowledge is gathered on an ongoing basis via attendance at events and through opinion pieces solicited or unsolicited via the varied knowledge products offered by SANGONeT.

5.5. Reflections and analytical overview

The SANGONeT case presented is different from the APC in that it is not virtual, nor are its people dispersed in physically distanced locations. Rather, it is more of a traditional organisation operating in a rather traditional mode with structures in place to serve as management teams, boards etc. that function face-to-face more than virtually.

This, combined with its operating 'virtually' in terms of delivery of its largest project, i.e. the NGO Portal, coupled with its face-to-face Thetha meetings, means a hybrid of usual KM strategies applicable to both virtual and traditional non-profit organisations are being used. The framework next captures the findings as relevant to SANGONet, not necessarily reflecting what can be termed positive practices.

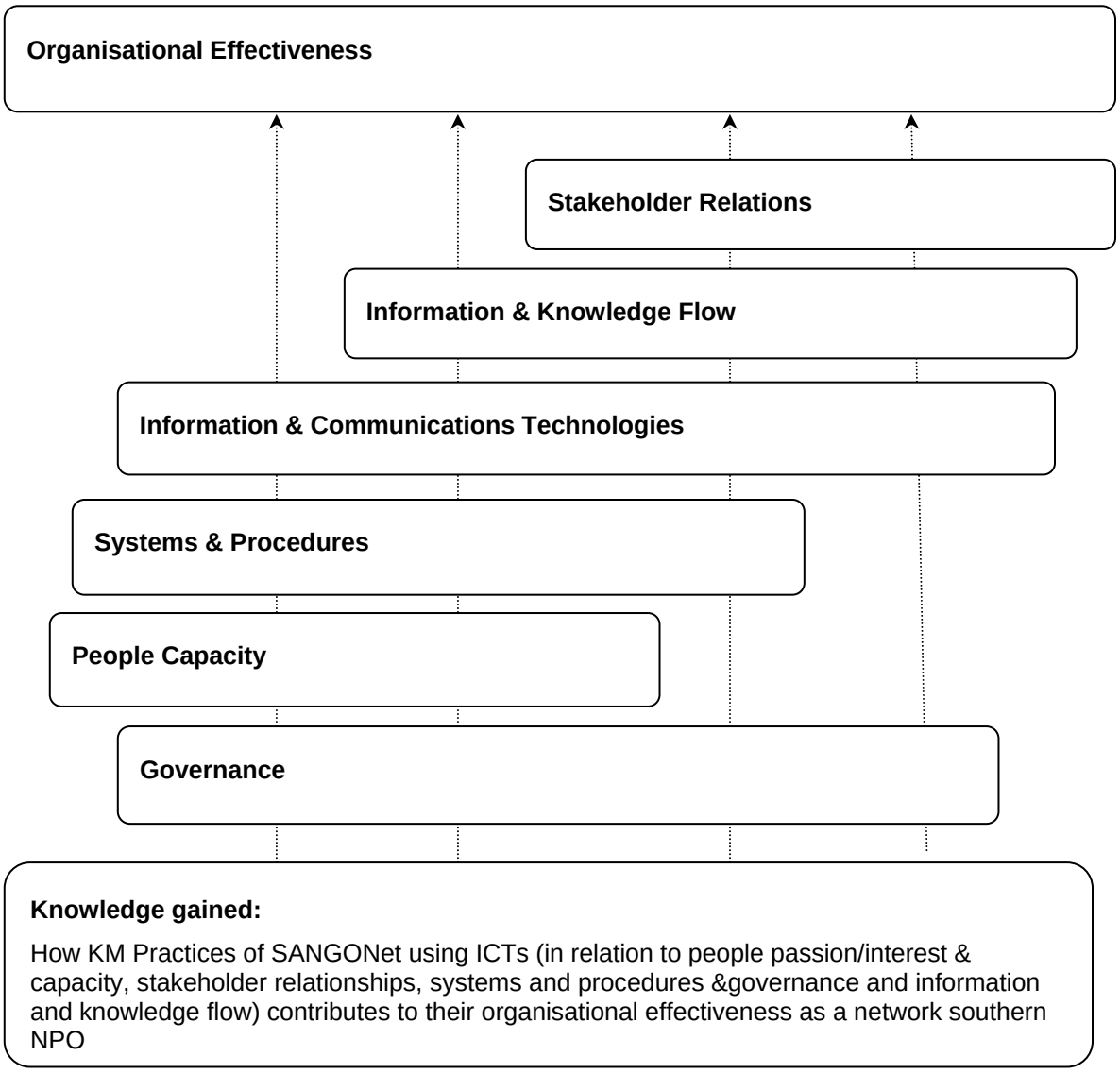

Figure 5.2 Lessons from SANGONet – input to KM framework for southern NPO effectiveness

(Source: based on Akinsanmi, 2010)

This continues to be a balance that is managed on a day-to-day basis juggling between sharing of knowledge externally and ensuring that such is also done internally within the various parts of the organisation while keeping in sight the goal of effectively facilitating civil societies work in creating social change. In the words of the SANGONet executive director:

> *'The ongoing challenge facing SANGONet is to strengthen its role and contribution through the {continuing} relevance of its products and services. This can be done by customising its ICT services to the specific needs of the NGO sector, improving its interaction, relationship and response to the needs of current and potential NGO client, building relationships and partnerships with strategic role players in the NGO, government and private sectors and providing leadership and guidance to the Southern African NGO sector as far as ICT issues are concerned' (Barnard, 2009)*

CHAPTER 6. ENABLING SOCIAL CHANGE: WOMEN'SNET

6.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings on Women'sNet, a non-profit organisation operating across South Africa and focused on enabling social change by empowering women in the sphere of information and communications technologies for the development women's empowerment using ICTs. Key concepts specific to this NPO are identified in relation to the conceptual KM and OE framework guiding this research.

The chapter begins with a brief look at the historic beginnings of Women'sNet and its emergence as an NPO primarily focused on enabling previously disadvantaged groups, in particular women and girls, to bring about social change in their locales using information and communications technologies. It delves into the operations and implementation strategies of the NPO's projects and activities. The chapter then goes into an analysis of the findings from the perspective of the research framework.

The findings present interesting additions to the discourse on the specific aspects of southern NPO's KM practices that directly contribute to their effectiveness. The chapter is wrapped up with a conclusion on the lessons from the Women'sNet case study for improving the effectiveness of southern NPOs through the practice of knowledge management.

6.2. Methodology and limitations

Women'sNet posed a range of unique challenges to this study with its small staff strength and very focused engagement on women and girls. Data were gathered via document reviews, a website review (both Women'sNet and partner organisations) as

well as key informant interviews with clients, recipients, partners and staff (e-mail interviews, Skype interviews, questionnaires, face-to-face and telephonic).

Data gathering also occurred via secondary interviews sourced from independent research conducted on the non-profit and from feedback given to the organisation post project activities. Its size meant data gathering and internal verification of such was limited to a core of three (at the time of the research) staff members. This certainly had a direct impact on the amount of independent and unbiased information available to the researcher.

Verification of historical knowledge was also limited to the oldest staff, the executive director and was uncorroborated due to a lack of historical data. (The organisation had a fire disaster in 2007, which destroyed a number of its documentation). Its web portal and association with the other two case studies though meant information could be verified base don their records and knowledge of Women'sNet and its origins.

6.2.1 History of Women'sNet

In 1997 women from NGOs, statutory bodies, and academia came together at a brainstorming workshop to set out the vision and strategic priorities for Women'sNet. These priorities included accessibility to ICTs for all women and the strategic provision of gender sensitive training to meet needs identified within locales. It was also agreed to focus on 'linking projects, people, tools and resources through the empowerment and support of technology planning processes within women's civil society organisations'. The latter is directly linked to the creation of a platform for women's voices and issues via the WOMEN'SNET website.

> *'It was a powerful, interactive and valuable opportunity for women and gender activists at that time in our history as South Africans, as activists and as women aware of the need to harness ICTs' (Radloff, 2009)*

This was at a time when debates where raging on the appropriateness of free and open software for developmental work. FOSS was adopted as its primary technological applications platform and this directly linked to its mandate of facilitating collaborative web site development and the strengthening of women's networks. It was also agreed to facilitate the dissemination of information in formats accessible to women who are not directly linked to the Internet.

Women'sNet was then created as a collaborative effort to develop a network that would facilitate the promotion of gender equality in South Africa by using ICTs. It was officially launched in March 1998 across three South African cities[21], as a joint initiative of South African Non-Governmental Organisation Network (SANGONet[22]) and the Commission on Gender Equality (CGE)[23].

From 1998 until October 2002 it operated as a project of SANGONet, and was located within SANGONet. In light of restructuring plans within SANGONet, its board agreed that Women'sNet be set up as an independent non-profit organisation. Three years after its emergence from a workshop session in 1997, Women'sNet was formally registered as a Section 21 company (a not-for profit organisation, in terms of South African company law) in January 2003.

Over the next four years Women'sNet, under the leadership of its executive director and board, grew in its ability to deliver on its mandate of empowering women creating social change using ICTs. This was in reality a major challenge with a range of funding issues threatening its existence. In 2007 a leadership change occurred and its core

[21] Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg

[22] www.ngopulse.co.za

[23] http://www.cge.org.za/

focus became advancing access to, and supporting, the strategic use of ICTs via a range of activities and projects.

Today Women'sNet[24] seeks to deepen women's access to and production of relevant information and quality content, with a view to supporting their participation in diverse social and policy processes, including decision-making on issues that affect their lives. This is achieved by providing platforms for collaborative online content production and sharing, and amplifying voices from varied localities on a global scale.

It is focused on continuing to facilitate access to content development, information-sharing and social networking tools, unlocking of skills that can assist women and girls, women's organisations and feminist and other human rights networks to strengthen local, regional and global activism around the human rights issues of the day. These issues include the freedom of expression and communication rights, and access to, and the application of, ICTs for human development.

Added to its mandate beyond 2003 was poor and marginalised communities' (emphasis on the efforts of (rural) women and girls), access to economic empowerment, and sustainable livelihoods. This is addressed by enabling access to and the use of ICTs, through content development and training that builds multiple literacy (including ICTs, financial literacy, etc.). It also conducts research into the evolving ICT needs and usage of the community-based development sector; with a view to helping facilitate their uptake and usage of existing and emerging ICT tools.

Women'sNet continues to engage in activities that deepen institutional capacity and capabilities within itself while strengthening and supporting southern African women's

[24] Section draws from www.Women'sNet.org.za

and human rights networks.



Figure 6.1 Women'sNet portal

6.2.2 Women'sNet people, governance, programmes

This section answers question on where Women'sNet as an organisation is today. It reflects on its present day vision and mission as this continues to shape the way it enables social change through it interventions with women and girls across South Africa. It then explores the internal structures of Women'sNet in terms of its people, governance and implementation modalities. An analysis of its KM practices and systems (both formal and informal) in implementation of projects and for day-to-day

running of the organisation is presented. A specific analysis of its effectiveness as an NPO enabling social change is then discussed in the findings section.

6.2.2.1 People

Women'sNet is a much smaller organisation in its scope and mandate. The nature of its mandate of enabling women and young girls is reflected in its definition and identification of its people. As at the time of this study, it had a total of four full-time staff, two part-time staff and one volunteer. The part-time staff and the volunteer serve multiple functions as web developer, technical consultant and project assistant.

The full-time staff members have varying functions, which directly impacts on implementation of specific activities of Women'sNet. The executive director is responsible for the general management and oversight of the NPOs activities. She is also charged with developing, in partnership with the board, and leading the implementation of the Women'sNet strategy.

The media and information manager has the responsibility of identifying, managing and keeping up-to-date on the varied technologies (ICTs) in use by the organisation. She is also tasked with identifying new technological opportunities that will help the NPO in its achievement of its goals. She directly manages all the information products as well.

A full-time project manager is directly responsible for the biggest project within the Women'sNet portfolio – the Girls'Net project. The office manager is directly responsible for the development of office procedures, managing human resources records, oversight of the finances, and maintaining organisational systems and procedures. This role is also tasked with the administrative and financial management for the NPO.

Women'sNet staff participate in policy processes and are active in advocating for principles and action areas for the information society that are both gender-inclusive and sensitive to the specificities of the African context. It is noted that as a much smaller organisation the core people strength of Women'sNet is very limited. Its membership of a larger network like the APC though gives it access to a wide range of

both local and international expertise, which it regularly draws on and partners with to deliver on its larger and more complex projects.

6.2.2.2 Governance

The smaller nature of Women'sNet directly influences its governance and management. It has a flat structure in that there is little or no hierarchy in evidence within the organisation. As a non-profit organisation, Women'sNet has no shareholders but has a range of 'clients' who benefit from its services. It is governed by a board, which meets three times a year.

> *'Our board is made up of six women of which three are from the University of Witwatersrand and three from within the NGO environment. They are all feminists and gender driven. They meet quarterly…' (Shackleton, 2009)*

The Board serves as its highest governing body and is made up of six individuals who are activists, academics and professionals in the area of women's empowerment, gender equality and technology. They bring expertise in a wide range of areas of key importance to the strategic focus and direction of Women'sNet, including finance, business, leadership, governance and information technology. Board meetings are held three times a year.

The small nature of this NPO again means the board is involved in day-to-day decision-making in that they are accessible and often consulted, not just by the executive director but by programme staff as well. They give input on project design and implementation as well as acting as mentors in some cases.

6.2.2.3 Programmes, projects and activities

Women'sNet is 'a feminist organisation that works to advance gender equality and

justice in South Africa using Information and Communication Technologies' (Women'sNet, 2009). They offer a range of services and products, including the provision of training and facilitation of content dissemination. These activities directly empower and support women, girls and gender-focused organisations, and encourage as well as help to shape their uptake and use of ICTs.

The Women'sNet strategy for enabling social change is shaped around three core areas of intervention. These are information and or content generation, capacity building and network development. Content development is an intricate part of its capacity development, which is specifically designed training projects equipping women and girls with ICT skills. Its activities around capacity building, development and content generation are all underpinned by the goal of building sustainable human networks, which address local developmental needs.

Outcomes from these activities and projects are then channelled through the Women'sNet website. Without the engagement with women's organisations and efforts to build their capacity, content flow to the Women'sNet site would be impeded. This model contributes to the sustainability of Women'sNet and its pool of clients, including South African women's organisations. It has also shaped perceptions that continue to contribute to and improve its regional and international profile as a non-profit organisation that 'disseminates relevant information and supports other gender-aware organisations in their work to advance gender equality' (Women'sNet, 2009).

At the regional level, Women'sNet is an active partner within an Africa-wide network of women in ICTs that have taken on the challenge of promoting ICTs for social development and gender transformation. It is an active participant in regional gender and ICT advocacy and training through its membership within APC Africa Women and the global network, APC WNSP. Where ICT circles would not normally include gender issues, Women'sNet actively engages as a gender and ICT advocacy organisation.

Since its inception, Women'sNet has successfully implemented a number of projects as

part of its mandate to support women in harnessing ICTs to facilitate women's empowerment through networking and special projects. These include its deepening democracy engagement, which helps to amplify 'voices of marginalised communities and human rights networks' (Women'sNet, 2009). This is achieved by creating and giving access to online and offline platforms and tools for the creation of locally relevant and high quality content. These serve as social and development-oriented networking spaces. Women'sNet is also focused on mainstreaming ICTs through the provision of free and or affordable access to ICT tools, facilitated access to relevant training, a focus on ICT policy research and advocacy, and collaborative exploration and application of ICTs to local developmental challenges. As part of sustainably engaging with local communities, Women's Net is committed to strengthening its own internal management systems and processes with the ultimate goal of being able to better enable local, national and regional networks for social change. This directly impacts on the livelihood strategies of poor and marginalised communities where these women and girls are based.

The range of interventions all falls within the areas of projects, services, forums and publications. This research study focuses on Women'sNet research on ICTs as they relate to women and gender, and as they intersect with content development and how they examine and integrate the outcomes from the impact that ICTs have on women's lives. Next is the service aspect, focused on helping gender-driven and women's organisations with technology planning using free and open source software aligned with the core strategic goals of the client organisation.

Finally, the section examines an overview of its ICT training services, touted as having 'the potential to make organisations more effective to reach more people and to help achieve organisational goals' (Women'sNet, 2009). This is done via needs-based training designed for women's organisations to aid in their effective use of technology to meet the real needs of women. It includes training on producing audio files for community radio and the Internet, creating digital stories, using the Internet and e-mail effectively, advocacy and lobbying online.

6.2.3 Knowledge products and areas of activities

6.2.3.1 Girls'Net[25]

This project builds on learning's and outcomes from past project engagements by Women'sNet of training 12-18 year old girls in rural areas in digital audio production training during 2002/2003. With the funding support of an international agency, participants produced audio spots on themes of their choice, with the goal of increasing awareness on their particular experiences in that area. The training included basic computer training, a theme identification process where the girls decided on specific issues to be addressed in their radio spots, script writing, recording and editing of the audio material. They wrote the scripts, recorded the spots, and finally edited the audio material to broadcast quality using the computer and production applications. These audio spots were then disseminated via the National Community radio forum to local community radio stations for broadcast.

Established in 2003, Girls'Net is a social and multi-media programme targeted at girls between the ages of 12 and 18. The aim of the project is to use ICTs to help these girls realise their full potential irrespective of their locale and economic status. This project is aimed at encouraging girls to utilise ICTs, opening up innovative ICT-oriented opportunities for them, and facilitating the formation of small groupings of girls in all nine South African provinces who will work together and be active participants and initiators in the information society.

It focuses on growing a social movement for girls using ICTs as creators of digital and textual information. The information created and/or generated is disseminated digitally

[25] Girls'Net: http://www.womensnet.org.za/Girls'Net-empowering-girls

(currently the Girls'Net link on Women'sNet website) and by script (through the Girls'Net Newsletter called Gist). Through its website, girls get to know of new technologies, and communicate with a wide range of experts, mentors and activists while accessing information on a wide range of issues as shared by the Women'sNet network.



Figure 6.2 Girls'Net Web Portal

The first phase of the project in 2003 – 2004 targeted girls in four South African provinces; i.e. Eastern Cape, Kwa-Zulu Natal, Limpopo and Gauteng. In its second phase the focus is on growing it to all provinces via existing girls' technology clubs, the girls' net website and the Gist newsletter – which is the information dissemination arm of the project. Each Girls'Net club meets on a bi-weekly basis with the oversight of a

mentor and they discuss issues affecting them while collaboratively determining how they can be addressed. Girls also have the opportunity to access ICT tools and learn how to apply them for their own development while becoming a vocal and contributing part of local and global activism on social change.

These meetings also serve as editorial sessions for the Gist newsletter. Gist shows the events that the girls in different clubs have been involved in, thus keeping the wider network engaged and up-to-date on various issues across all clubs. Each edition is usually thematic. It brings a localised spin on the global issues around girl child issues while giving a platform for local issues to be voiced on a wider regional scale.



Figure 6.3 Girls'Net Gist Newsletter

6.2.3.2 Citizen journalism[26]

Citizen journalism is aimed at literally redefining the way news is gathered, shared and perceived. It turns the tables on traditional news by enabling the consumer of media and news to be the identifier, producer and disseminator of news. This directly enables the initiation of social change by giving an avenue for sharing information and shaping mass media while reaching global audiences across geographical distances.

The overall objective of the project is to enable civil society organisations' capacity to provide diverse, critical, reliable and relevant information and support their social change efforts. It seeks to contribute to the vibrancy and sustainability of the media by enabling a culture of debate, information sharing and engagement across its civil society network. The focus is on increasing the capacity of civil society actors and human rights activists to express their approaches and opinion, and to produce content that is engaging, relevant and critical using ICTs for information generation and dissemination.

It also seeks to deepen democracy through vibrant engagement prompted via citizen media by providing access to information that helps individuals know their rights and realise them, and providing sufficient information for citizens to form opinions and make decisions by providing a balance of views on any issue. This is a direct response to critiques of media on its biased reporting and representation.

This project is a direct response to this critique by increasing the number of people

[26] Citizen Journalism http://www.womensnet.org.za/citizen-journalism

involved in media production as well as impacting types of content in circulation, particularly those that deepen citizenship and democracy.

6.2.3.3 Web Portal[27]

The Women'sNet portal is an information and knowledge centre for its internal (staff) and external (clients) stakeholders. It provides information on people, issues, resources and tools for social activism around women, girls and gender. It has over a 1 653 registered and active subscribers who represent a range of organisations as information managers and coordinators. These make use of a range of online discussion forums, blogs and mailing lists around thematic areas such as women and the democratic process in South Africa.

The portal hosts the electronic newsletter, which is produced daily and hosts ongoing campaigns. It also houses the digital stories section produced once a month as part of the outcome of face-to-face trainings and engagement with clients. Other knowledge products include the quarterly called 'Intersections,' which is targeted at young girls, and projects like the 'Keep your Chats exactly that' which addresses safety on social networking sites and the Internet in general.

6.3. Research findings

Based on feedback to its website and reports accessed during this research, evidence found shows that with the very limited funding available to them, Women'sNet has been relatively successful in its mission of enabling women and girls with ICTs to bring about sustainable social change.

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[27] ICT Portal: http://www.womensnet.org.za/

6.3.1 People capacity

6.3.1.1 Gender and size

Of all three case studies, Women'sNet stands alone on two major aspects: it is not only the smallest southern non-profit organisation but consists entirely of women both at the staff, volunteer and board level. This could be because of its focus as a feminist organisation working on gender issues and women and girls' empowerment.

> *'Its main aim is to demystify the use of ICTs by and to WOMEN; to provide access to ICTs' (Women'sNet, 2009)*

There have been studies on the impact of gender on leadership, knowledge management and effectiveness as catalysts of social change. Authors such as Ajiferuke (2003) and Singh (2008) both identify gender as a key influence on leadership styles, which directly impacts on knowledge management strategies and their implementation. This study, though, is not focused on investigating or further exploring this concept; rather the evidence in an all female southern non-profit organisation is that there is more of a sense of 'sisterhood' and 'family' strongly pervading the organisation (both positively and negatively). Its mandate clearly states its role as an enabler of women and girls via training and giving access as well as knowledge. This is evident in its overarching goal for identifying interns and volunteers that play a vital role in its delivery.

> *'For the paid one year internship position {our} main goal is to empower young South African women from previously disadvantaged backgrounds' (Marishane, 2009).*

6.3.1.2 Passion and personal interest

This is mitigated by the passion and personal interest driving the small staff team within Women'sNet, which was identified by staff as the main reason for 'staying' beyond the many issues of funding and lack of dedicated staff empowerment strategies.

> *'Staff stay for the belief in and passion for [the] organisation and project[s], for the direct impact nature of projects; for idealism; for the innovative nature of projects…' (Ramokobala, 2009)*

6.3.1.3 Management structure/style

It is noted that due to its relatively flat management structure (due to its size) a level of skills development and sharing occurs at the 'mentor-mentee' level across the organisation.

> *'Though hierarchical in its make up in reality it's a very flat management structure. There four full time staff playing multiple roles, an intern and varying number of consultants at any point in time' (Marishane, 2009)*

This small nature means there is a lot of interaction and involvement of all parts of the organisation in project development and deployment. An example of such is the mentorship role played by board members with staff.

> *'[The board is] easily and directly accessible to staff members via Skype, telephone and e-mail. They act as mentors and interact directly with staff on projects' (Shackleton, 2009)*

6.3.1.4 Articulated KM strategy

Though the smallest non-profit organisation in this study, Women'sNet is the only organisation that had an articulated strategy for its internal knowledge management.

This was accessible via the internal document drive on its computer network. This study did not find any evidence that this KM strategy is followed or applied to its everyday work. It was not overtly evident as being used and consulted beyond a shared drive where documents are kept and accessible to all staff. When questioned, only the information manager seemed to be aware of the details of the said strategy.

6.3.1.5 Skills development and retention

In 2007 a change in leadership occurred within the organisation and this led to a 90% staff turnover in the space of a year. This in part was precipitated by a lack of clarity on the direction the organisation was headed and/or the opportunities for further development for these relatively experienced people.

This research found no data to indicate that the issue of formalised skills enhancement and capacity improvement for staff had been put in place. No evidence existed that its externally focused mission of enablement was translated in a structured way to its staff members. Capacity development occurs for staff but in an *ad-hoc* manner while delivering on projects.

> *'We have no formal skills development process or training for staff members…self motivated on job learning via attendance at workshops; trainings organised and via membership/partnership with and within larger networks like the APC…' (Shackleton, 2009)*

This is both a positive and a negative in that the staff does get first hand training, but negatively in that this is dictated by the availability of funds and is based on project needs rather than staff career needs.

6.3.2 Systems and procedures

6.3.2.1 Needs and funds driven project identification

Women'sNet, in its eight years of existence, has remained focused on enabling women, young girls and gender-oriented organisations by initiating a range of largely short-term projects and/or interventions. These are designed based on needs; either articulated by the recipient organisation or identified in development discussions.

> *'Key is to demystify the use of ICTs and this is done via various projects; based on the needs of the organisations that we are working with; also driven by the need to provide 'the right to information' for everyone; we also achieve our vision via research on technologies (Marishane, 2009)*

This results in the ongoing relevance of the organisation in the social change space, as it is a direct response to the needs of its target community. It is important to mention that that is an important driving factor, as is the source of the funding. Funding partners tend to provide funds based on their desire to have work done on a specific sectorial issue. This is the case with the citizen journalism project taken on by this organisation.

6.3.3 Information and knowledge flow

6.3.3.1 Learning and cross fertilisation

The size of Women'sNet directly impacts on the way information is generated and

shared internally in that information is either a conversation or just an individual away. The downside to this is that when the individual in whom the knowledge resides, or who has access to its location, is unavailable, then it remains inaccessible.

This was experienced by the researcher in her attempt to get a first hand history of the organisation but it was not available till the executive director was available to meet with her.

6.3.3.2 Communities of practice

Its external information and knowledge sharing, on the other hand, is done via its many knowledge publications - all originating from its web portal. This information is sourced from project outcomes and shared centrally across its knowledge portal. Knowledge products such as the e-Newsletter and Gist are direct outputs of physical engagements on its mission of empowering women and girls.

> *'Without women's organisations' active participation in content generation, Women'sNet loses its authenticity and uniqueness…' (Women'sNet, 2009)*

This active participation and contribution results in cross fertilisation of information and knowledge across the organisation both internally and externally. This learning orientation directly contributes to its continuing efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of similar projects and activities. It also contributes to the non-profit organisation's ability to learn from within itself – though no data to support that this was taking place was found during this research.

6.3.4 Stakeholder relations

6.3.4.1 Engagement

Directly linked to the preceding findings on WOMENsNet's characteristics as an information generating and learning organisation is the fact that these learning's are largely driven by its primary stakeholders – the recipients of its capacity development activities.

'Our approach is to work through partnerships, strengthening both our work and our partners' work, to reach more people and improve women and girls' lives' (Shackleton, 2009)

These range from individuals to organisations engaged in different aspects of creating social change. There is a direct relationship between Women'sNet clients, which is cyclical in nature in that they begin as recipients of project trainings, amongst other things, and end up directly increasing its knowledge base using their newly acquired skills and knowledge.

6.3.4.2 Usage of Web 2.0

As a result of it small nature and its membership of networks like the APC, Women'sNet partners with a range of national and sub-regional organisation to meet its mandate on projects and activities. These range from training partners to advocacy and issue organisations which support its delivery to women and girls.

'We partner with organisations like POWA, WOUGNET (in Uganda via the APC network) and members of relevant similar goal oriented organisations' (Radloff, 2009).

This relationship is dependent on its use of, and leveraging, a range of information and communications' technologies including Skype, social networking portals like NING and Facebook, amongst a range of other traditional technologies.

6.3.5 Reflection and analytical overview

The findings above shed light on the knowledge management practices of Women'sNet. It relates these practices to its range of knowledge activities (past and present) delivered with the aid of new technologies. The role of its small but distinct

management and governance structure in identifying and driving implementation is critical to effective delivery and growth of capacity within the organisation.

Its relatively structured approach to knowledge recycling across and within projects is also important to its continuing occupation of a niche role in women and girls' enablement in the social change cycle. These findings lend themselves to the research framework and add Women'sNet's specific elements as applicable to other small southern non-profit organisations enabling social change.

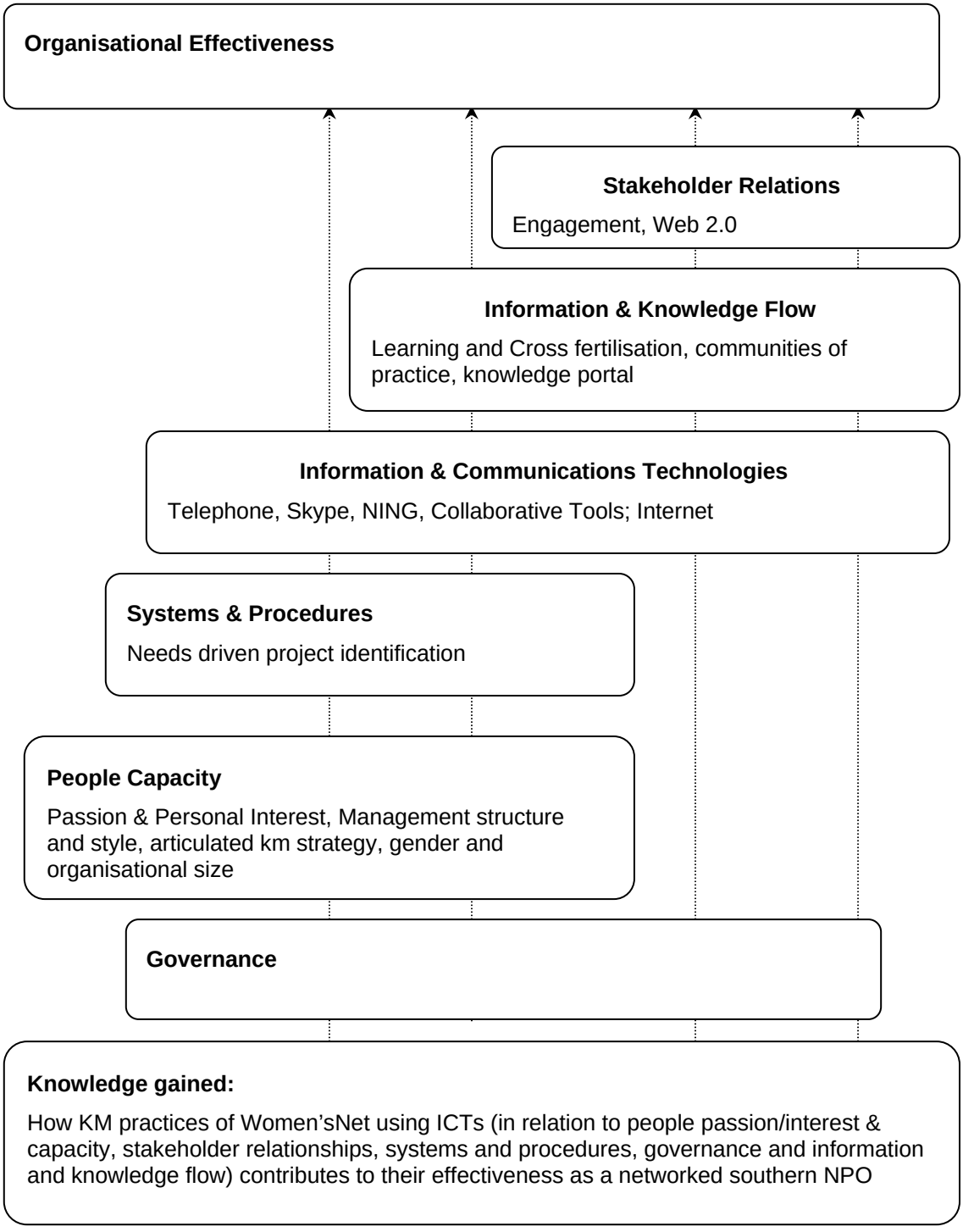

Figure 6.4 Lessons from Women'sNet – input to KM framework for southern NPO effectiveness

Source: Akinsanmi, 2010

CHAPTER 7. TRENDS IN THREE NETWORKED SOUTHERN NPOs: KM AND ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

7.1. Introduction

This chapter is an analytical overview of the findings from this research. It briefly discusses the theoretical reasoning that led to the research design, data collection, findings and analysis. It begins with tracing the known relationship between knowledge management and organisational effectiveness, presents an analysis of the main findings for the set of case studies, and discusses findings applicable to networked southern non-profit organisations. It concludes with an analytical overview of all findings on the knowledge management practices of the networked southern non-profit organisations studied.

These are discussed thematically using the knowledge management concepts as general categories, ranging from people capacity to governance with sub categories identified through the research and the impact the use of Web 2.0 tools has on their effectiveness. This analytical overview provides the basis for constructing a framework generally applicable to any southern non-profit organisation. The framework connects the findings on specific KM practices on people capacity, systems and procedures, information and knowledge flow, governance and technology use to the effectiveness of each networked southern non-profit organisation. It should be noted that the identification of knowledge management as an organisational system was not the departure point for this study, nor was it a study of technologies used for the storage and management of data only.

7.2. The research framework

The conceptual definition of knowledge management guiding this study is that of Wiig (1995) which defines it as 'the systematic, explicit, and deliberate building, renewal and application of knowledge to maximise an enterprise's knowledge-related effectiveness and returns from its knowledge assets'.

To develop a foundational conceptual framework for this study, an in-depth exploration was conducted on the concepts and theories that exist with respect to organisational effectiveness, knowledge management and the NPO sector. The key research question investigates the relationship between selected aspects of knowledge management and the effectiveness of networked southern NPOs using information and communications technologies. To answer this question, three activities were undertaken: (a) an exploration of the varied theoretical perspectives discussed in the literature on the themes of organisational effectiveness, knowledge management, non-profit organisations and social change; (b) the collection of data on the three case study networked southern non-profit organisations, and (c) an analysis of the data and collation of the findings in line with the conceptual framework proposed.

7.2.1 Conceptual framework

The theoretical perspective on which the research framework was built is that of the multiple constituency organisational effectiveness model, which recognises that 'an organisation comprises multiple stakeholders or constituents who are likely to use different criteria to evaluate its effectiveness' (Zammuto, 1984). This was further explored by Helms (2001) and he identified specific indicators of organisational effectiveness including management experience, organisational structure, political impact and knowledge management.

The research was undertaken knowing that even though this range of definitions for organisational effectiveness is clear-cut, it can be very subjective in practice to assess

effectiveness with respect to organisational objectives because organisational goals are often complex, incommensurable, or even conflicting (Hall, 1991).

However, according to the goal model, organisational effectiveness is measured by the extent to which an organisation meets the needs of the population it serves, and the quality and sustainability of the services needed by the clients.

The research framework then draws on Green and Griesinger's (1996) measurements of organisational effectiveness, which identify six key areas influencing the effectiveness of non-profit organisations. These include fundraising, mission and policy (programmes and services), financial management, governance, human resources management, and public or constituency communication.

The research framework is in part an adaptation of three of the six key areas identified in Green and Griesinger's (1996) measurements model as the primary intangible resources of effectiveness for knowledge-oriented organisations. These three (governance, human resources management and public or constituency communication) identify resource areas that influence a southern non-profit organisation's capability to be effective in its delivery on organisational objectives (Dawson, 2000a).

Within the conceptual framework, the skills and capabilities of the human capital of networked southern non-profit organisations are translated as 'people capacity'. Next are the organisational infrastructure and processes, which are translated as the systems and procedures within the case study organisations. Third is an analysis of the ICT and other infrastructure in use for information and knowledge flow within and beyond projects. Finally is what Dawson (2000b) termed 'relationship capital' and which within this research has been identified as each non-profit organisation's stakeholder relations (internal and external). Thus the framework speaks to each organisation's overall structure, mission and goals as cut across by people capacity, systems and procedures, information and knowledge flows, its relationship with

stakeholders, and how it utilises technology.

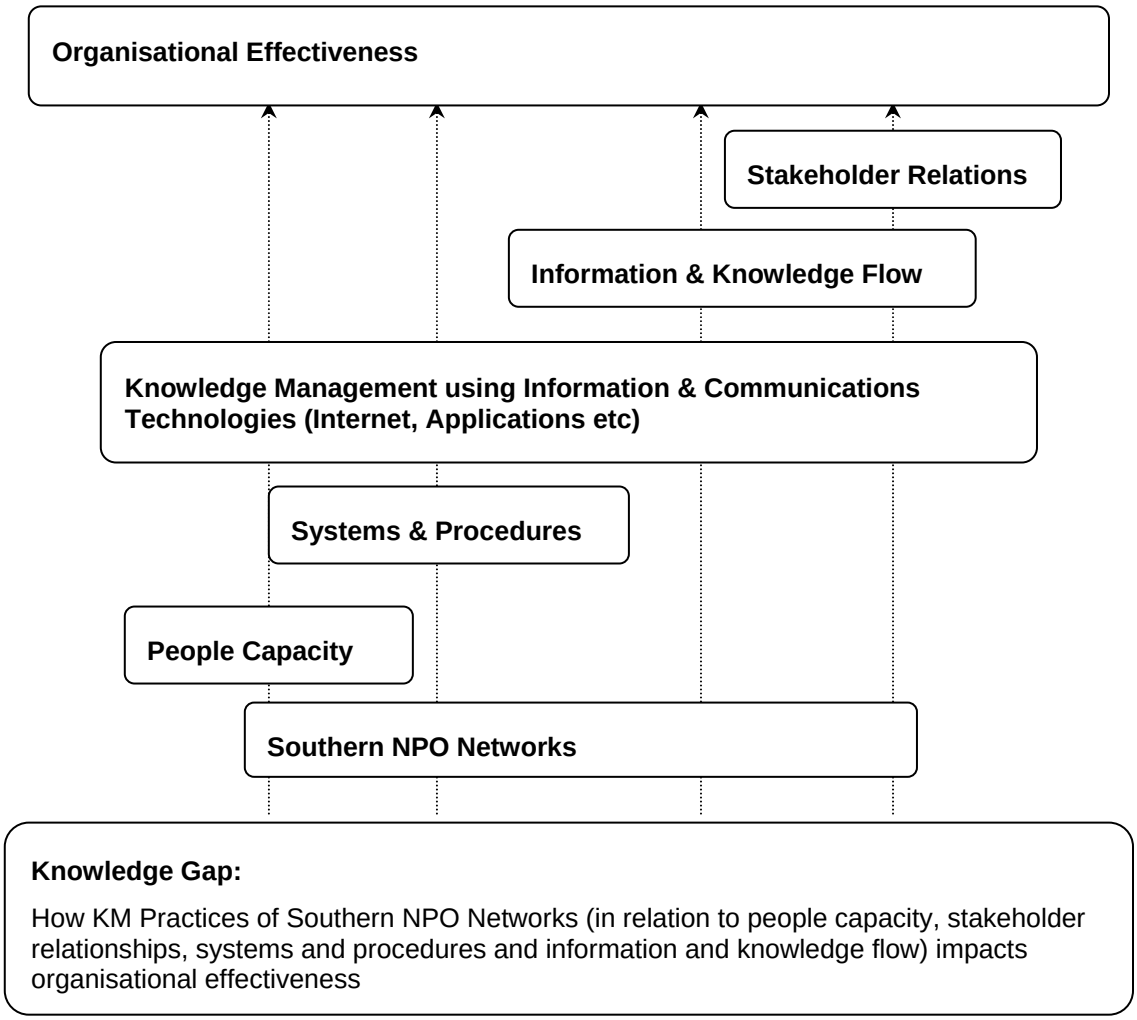

Figure 7.1 The Research Framework

Source: Akinsanmi, T.O. 2009

Based on the findings from this study, knowledge management for effective networked southern NPOs is thus defined as the 'systematic knowledge gathering and utilisation practices (formal and informal), which directly and/or indirectly impact on the networked southern non-profit organisation's ability to effectively deliver on its organisational goals' (Akinsanmi, 2010).

7.3. Effective knowledge management practices for creating, facilitating and enabling change in networked southern NPOs

The departure point for this research was recognising knowledge management as a key perspective from which southern non-profit organisations' effectiveness can be 'measured'. Cross cutting areas of knowledge management and effective organisational disciplines were then identified as the lens through which each case study was examined, analysed and conclusions drawn from. Networked southern non-profit organisations were identified based on their operating from and within developing countries to address development country issues as well as their geographical positioning in the southern hemisphere. The goal of the research study was not to determine the success or failure of particular projects of the organisation but rather to determine patterns in their knowledge management practices that can be further adapted, related and utilised by other southern non-profit organisations seeking to be more effective.

The research answered the question of how the knowledge management practices of southern non-profit organisational networks are key to their effectiveness. It analysed how projects and activities are implemented using these specific KM practices. The analysis then explored the relationship between the practices and the organisation's ability to be effective via a number of projects. The latter was achieved by relating output with specific goals that had been indicated in the earlier stages of the project.

Each case study also had very specific organisational characteristics and practices that set it apart from the others once data gathered were coded and analysed. A common denominator which had not been a core part of the research framework but that emerged as vital to each of the southern non-profit organisation's effectiveness is the governance systems in place to manage network functionality and delivery. They all had different structures and style, but these drove the commitment to be effective. These governance systems lend credence to the applicability of the framework

developed to a range of southern non-profit organisations engaged in any part of social change.

7.3.1 APC: creating social change

The APC operates as an international southern non-profit organisation leveraging information and communications technologies and operating virtually. This virtual nature can be traced to its beginnings as a guerrilla-type organisation gathering, providing access to and sharing 'banned' information – operating across continents beneath 'oppressive and suppressive' conditions as it sought political, social and economic liberation for societies and communities. Their governance structures, a system loosely guiding information and knowledge flow, people capacity, procedures and relations with its stakeholders, all directly influences and contribute to its effectiveness as a networked southern NPO creating social change.

Its use of cutting edge Web 2.0 technologies, in particular, puts it at the forefront of establishing innovative management and implementation practices as it creates social change. It 'defies' the traditional conventions of how large network organisation in particular on governance and delivery of goals by its virtual, flat structured and stakeholder-orientation practices. It is able to not only fulfil its core missions and objective but also enables others, including its members, to bring about political change as seen via its many communities of practices, virtual advocacy and mobilisation, and its governance model which places the largest concentration of strategy direction in the hands of the council.

Of all three non-profit organisations, the APC emerged as having an active and vibrant learning culture driven by its community orientation and evidenced in its many communities of practice. Its range of knowledge, products designed and delivered using information and communications technologies, plays a crucial part in its being effective – both from a programme and organisational perspective.

This effectiveness is evidenced in the impact it has had on policy processes such as the broadband initiative where mobilisation of civil society has been achieved by using past knowledge gathered and web 2.0 tools to mobilise. Its continued relevance after over 20 years in the information and communications arena for development space can be directly attributed to its sustained people capacity driven by a culture of internal learning and skills sharing.

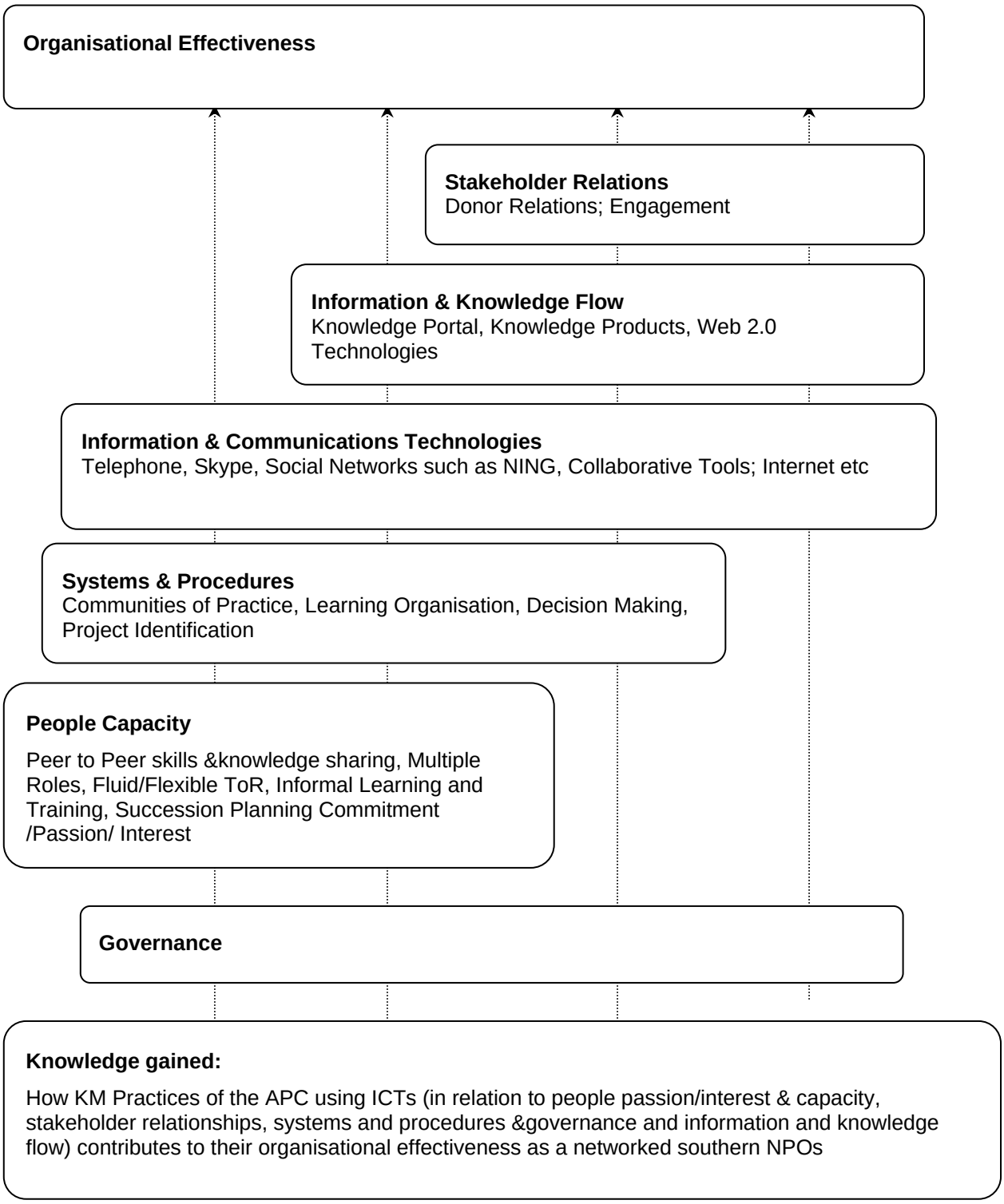

Figure 7.2 Lessons from APC – input to KM framework for southern NPO effectiveness

Source: Akinsanmi, 2010

7.3.2 SANGONet: facilitating social change

SANGONet emerged as a very structured, traditional non-profit organisation with very distinct non-integrating roles for the board, the management and other staff. This can be linked to its origins as one of the first ISPs serving not just the non-profit sector but also the for-profit sector in South Africa. This business orientation continues to pervade the thinking of the organisation and further research on the role this plays in its longevity could be explored.

It also operates from its physical offices as a traditional organisation with minimal virtual operations due to the overarching preference by management of having its team in the same location. It should be noted that SANGONet, at the time of this research, had begun to minimally explore virtual operations by implementing some 'work from home' policies and staff-sharing programmes with other non-profit organisations in its network. Of the three case studies, it has the most extensive external knowledge management strategy. This has been driven by the shift in its mandate between 2005 and 2007 when it re-focused on being a facilitator of knowledge for the non-profit sector.

To remain consistently effective, the organisation, and in particular its management, has had to balance its commitment to the sharing of knowledge externally. This is

done via its NGO pulse portal, which is its primary point of contact with its primary stakeholders – other southern Africa civil society organisations. This portal has become a primary source of civil society knowledge across varied themes for a range of stakeholders and boasts the only comprehensive NGO directory for South Africa.

On the other side of this balancing act is ensuring that it does not loose sight of internal knowledge sharing within and across project teams. This is vital to its continuing ability to effectively facilitate civil societies' work in creating social change via the technological and knowledge services it provides. A hybrid of strategies is used more often as it finds its footing in catering to a wider network of subscribers that are consistent users and not 'once off' or 'once in a while' engagements.

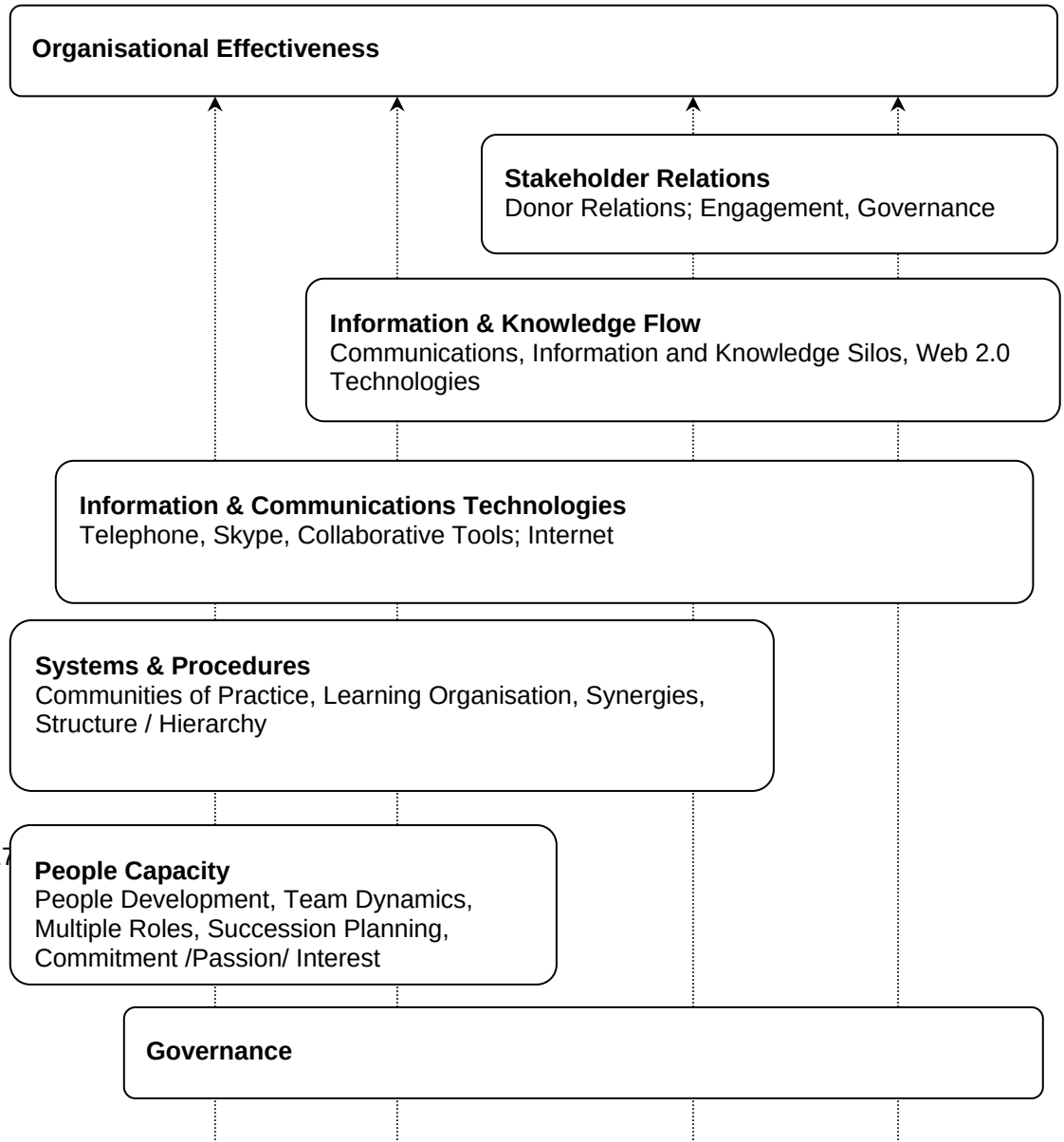

Figure 7.3 Lessons from SANGONet – input to KM framework for southern NPO effectiveness

Source: Akinsanmi, 2010

7.3.3 Women'sNet: enabling social change

The smallest of all three networked southern NPOs studied, Women'sNet, stood out in its being all female – in its focus and human resource pool. The role of its small but distinct management and governance structure in identifying and driving implementation emerged as critical for the effective delivery and growth of capacity within the organisation and for projects. Its membership of the APC network also lends itself to strengthening its overall capacity to be effective in delivery and growth of its focus area.

Women'sNet, of all three case studies, had a very active practice of feeding information and knowledge across projects and activities. This relatively structured approach to knowledge recycling across and within projects using ICTs emerged during this study as important to its continuing occupation of a niche role in women and girls' enablement in the social change cycle. A major example of this symbiotic knowledge-

sharing process is found in the Girls'Net activities, which then serve as the primary source of content for the Gist newsletter. The Gist newsletter is in turn a platform where feedback is sought from a wider audience on what aspects and thematic areas targeted audience would like to engage with, as well as receive feedback on their past interventions.

This range of knowledge activities (past and present) has leveraged information and communications technologies. In some instances, these ICTs are relatively new technologies in the communities being served by Women'sNet and this again influences the type of projects and activities deployed with and through these ICTs. They currently offer a range of mobile-based campaigns around safety on mobile chat platforms for girls that were initiated based on feedback received from a face-to-face workshop on using the mobile platform for activism.

Further study is necessary on the influence its all female nature has on its effectiveness as a networked southern non-profit organisation. This would shed light on its relative success in the field of women's enablement.

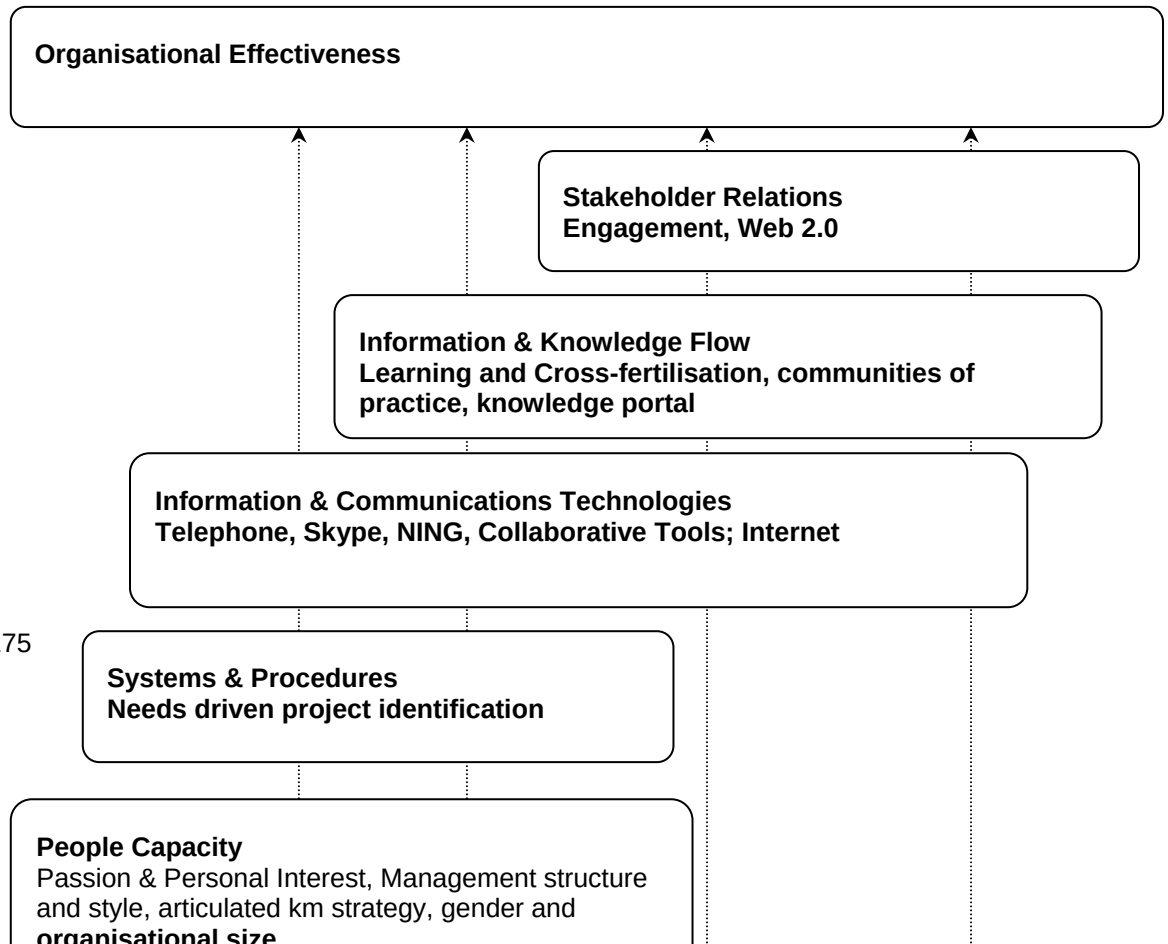

Figure 7.4 Lessons from Women'sNet – input to KM framework for southern NPO effectiveness

Source: Akinsanmi, 2010

7.4. Analysis of generic findings and implications for networked southern NPOs

This section presents a table that captures the findings from all case studies as they fit within the broader knowledge management concepts as identified in the research framework. These are knowledge management concepts related to organisational effectiveness as identified by Wiig (1995) and applied to the analytical findings of the case studies of the networked southern non-profit organisations. These are discussed in detail in the preceding chapters and all contribute to the networked southern non-profits organisations' effectiveness.

This section is not a comparison but rather builds on the research framework by identifying and matching specific practices as found in the knowledge management practices of networked NPOs that impact on their effectiveness. It adds to the body of knowledge specific to networked non-profit organisations' knowledge management practices within the four conceptual areas in the framework. It includes findings that cut across concept areas, such as the use of networking technologies, social platforms on the World Wide Web, through to synergies in virtual spaces.

Table 7.1 Findings on practices of KM concepts impacting organisational effectiveness in networked southern non-profit organisations

ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS-RELATED KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT CONCEPTS					
	Governance	People Capacity	Systems & Procedures	Information & Knowledge Flow	Stakeholder Relations
Practices	Networked organisational structure	Multiple roles: within and across organisations	Communal project identification and adaptation	Network-driven and developed knowledge products and portals	Stakeholder orientation and engagement across networks
	Networked participatory project leadership	Fluid/flexible terms of reference	Networked knowledge communities of practice	Web 2.0	Synergies in virtual spaces
	Virtual operations	Succession planning in networks	Virtual learning organisation	Articulated KM strategy	Networked donor dynamics
	Open access	Interest + Passion+ Commitment and connectedness		Internal knowledge Silos	
		Informal people development		Network cross-fertilisation	
		Virtual learning networks			
		Peer-to-peer skills and knowledge sharing			
		Team dynamics			
	USE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES				

Source: Akinsanmi, 2010.

This section gives a brief overview of all findings in each concept category, as identified in the table above. There is a focus on the generic research findings that can be applied to a broad range of networked southern non-profit organisations with mention of a few specificities that the research has shown as relevant to such. The researcher discusses the commonality within the five broad conceptual categories and then groups these under 17 different sub-categories which the findings of this research body supports as key for an effective networked southern non-profit organisation.

7.4.1 Governance

Leadership, in its traditional or 21st century form, is a vital component in any attempt for an organisation to be effective. Findings from the three cases studied show a distinct difference in governance and leadership styles required in networked southern NPOs as differing from the traditional leadership and governance approaches that are either top down or linear in nature.. The governance structure, its leadership and actual location, as peculiar to the networked southern non-profit organisation, plays a crucial part in whether or not an organisation can be relevant and effective.

A key characteristic is the quality of those in leadership position and/or with authority in the networked southern NPOs, which in the case of this research reveals as being networked participatory project-based leadership. This is aided by the fact that such leadership operations occur virtually, and are open and accessible to all members of the network.

The effectiveness of a networked southern non-profit organisation's governance system can therefore be directly linked to having knowledge management processes that encourage input, feedback and actual recognisable usage of the information gathered to determine the strategy and direction for the NPO. The networked nature also means the sphere of influence is relatively extensive, as is the impact of the decisions taken. Thus, what the researcher terms 'participatory and open access to

network leadership supported by mechanisms for virtual operations' is key to effectiveness within networked southern NPOs.

7.4.2 Participatory and open access to network leadership

The common factor with all three southern non-profit organisations that can be directly linked to practices on knowledge management influencing effectiveness is open access to leadership, the participatory nature of governance, and the availability of the core leadership team to be a part of the implementation process as the need arises across the network. This finding generic to all three case studies is that of a prevalence of network-oriented project-based leadership driving the growth of the entire non-profit organisation. This participatory-networked leadership can best be described as 'interwoven'.

In most networks, the relationships tend to be top-down and, due to their large nature, interactivity is limited to inter-organisational leadership. In these case studies though, access and interactivity occurs across organisations from staff to staff, members to members, members to leadership teams, leadership to leadership, and leadership to members. There was no evidence found of bureaucracy or limitations of seeking advice, partnerships or resources across the networks; rather a meshing and interlocking of all parts of the networked southern NPO.

This 'interwoven' nature impacts on the decision-making process, advice sought and clarity given on the path that management chooses to tread in fulfilling the mission and goals. It also means there is consistent communication between those in leadership, and those directly involved in implementation and the clients. These communication pathways have to be known to all concerned before they can be efficiently used.

From the various boards to the actual management team there is a driving passion that results in being available to leverage their wide-ranging network for the cause of the networked southern non-profit organisation. It should be noted as important that a

balance has to be maintained between access to and separation of roles and/or powers by ensuring access to project staff and vice versa on the part of the board but does not result in interference. All three case studies had some form of structure within the organisation with a strong culture of participatory governance, not just from staff but also external stakeholders. This structure differed in terms of numbers, role in the day-to-day implementation, and the manner of its board members' selection.

The analysis of data showed leadership occurring not from the top echelons of management but from a project or task leader as the driving force for a particular project.

A case in point is the APC women's networking support programme (APC-WNSP), which emerged bottom-up, growing on a group of women's interests at a national workshop. In the case of the APC and SANGONet there is clear delineation between the management team, the board and the rest of the staff. Within Women'sNet, due to its relatively smaller staff complement, the core leadership team is also the team that manages projects and the implementation on a day-to-day basis.

7.4.3 Virtual operations

A major part of communication and day-to-day operations between the governance and/or leadership team and staff occurs virtually in all three case studies. By this is meant that it is not restricted to their being located in the same physical space. There are face-to-face meetings, but they are organised or piggy-backed on other events; usually those related to the mission of the southern non-profit organisation. Strategy sessions, project planning sessions, evaluations, training, and even advocacy sessions are all played out in virtual space. These networked southern NPOs utilise information and communications technologies and applications such as Skype, social media platforms, and customised internal and external online discussion spaces. These technologies not only serve as virtual platforms but they are also used as primary information and knowledge repositories. Thus, irrespective of location of a team or

project member, there is equal access to information to enable efficient delivery. This virtual nature was more in evidence within APC, a much larger organisation than Women'sNet due to their network and staff strength.

7.4.4 People capacity

For this research, the concept of people capacity refers to the skills and human capital within and available to the networked southern non-profit organisation, both internally and externally. Post analysis of data gathered from all case studies, it is evident that human capital plays a vital role in the southern non-profit organisation's ability to be effective. This, though, is dependent on what drives each individual, their particular skills set which allows them to play multiple roles, access to and planning for people development by the NPO to ensure retention of such human capital, and/or the knowledge they have.

Findings from this study show a prevalence of individuals occupying and fulfilling a multiplicity of roles within and across organisations in the same network. This is a practice that is largely fuelled by individual interests and passion for the core focus area of the organisation. This directly influences a willingness to share knowledge within such networks as well as amongst staff. This communal skills-sharing in semi-formalised virtual learning networks, and in all three organisations studied it is the major avenue for people development that takes the least resources away from core delivery areas. Based on these findings, the following section speaks to what the researcher identifies within people capacity as directly impacting the southern NPO's effectiveness.

7.4.4.1 Interest, passion, commitment and connectedness

In each of the three case studies evidence was found of people being driven by their personal beliefs, interests and passion for the cause, and their agenda for creating, enabling and/or facilitating social change. Where an interest in the mission and goals

of the southern non-profit organisation is present there usually is a personal commitment to, and passion for, these issues. This directly influences the level of commitment of the individual, and on a wider scale, the team. This is not necessarily the driving cause within other organisational types or in other kinds of non-profit organisations. This is not to say that this is **all** that is required to ensure commitment in networked southern non-profit organisations.

In all three southern non-profit organisations studied, this drives the focus on achieving the goals and mission, irrespective of challenges faced on the road to achievement. These challenges were spoken of with some affection, and pride that against all odds the advocacy continues. This indicates that an abiding passion for the organisation's mission and vision is essential to drive and help retain its human capital, which directly impacts on a continued commitment to apply knowledge management systems to ensure the mission is achieved.

7.4.4.2 Multiple roles: within and across organisations

Related to this practice of being first and foremost passionate and committed to the cause, is the willingness to play a multiplicity of roles either within or beyond the organisation - all with the aim of fulfilling what can be termed 'the call to social change'. This lack of 'rigidity' or structure can be viewed as either a negative or a positive practice and is a major characteristic of non-profit organisations. What sets the findings from this study apart is the leveraging of technology to facilitate fulfilment of these multiple roles, which occur within and across organisations.

This finding does not translate to multiple or increased payment, as is the case for the private sector where functionalities fulfilled by personnel are commensurate in most cases with earnings. Rather it was found that in all three organisations, the payment structure was well below private and public sector levels. On the other hand, people with more than one role frees up funding for project implementation while also ensuring that learnings from various aspects of the NPO can be leveraged. This is dependent

on the southern non-profit organisation's ability and/or willingness to learn from within and beyond itself. This is discussed further below, in the systems and procedures section.

7.4.4.3 Communal skills-sharing and development in virtual learning networks

None of the three non-profit organisations studied had a formalised strategy for people development, nor did they have a specific skills-sharing and training strategy. All three, though, showed awareness for the importance of continuing to skill and re-skill their human capital via project-related activities. This was evident in all three case studies (more so in two of the three) manifesting as peer-to-peer training strategies, the existence of informal learning environments using Internet spaces such as NING, project-initiated skills development, and in a rare case, an embedded training strategy for all staff within specific aspects of the project. A recurring characteristic in the findings is that a majority of the NPO's people complement has a multiplicity of roles in the wider society where they serve as either academics, professionals, or in some cases have had past experience across various sectors of society. This contributes to the ongoing development, and learnings from these extended engagements are utilised within and across all three networked southern non-profit organisations studied. This directly improves the organisation's ability to remain relevant with their extended access to trends and knowledge from other sectors gained by their people complement that serve in other roles beyond the networked southern NPO role. This symbiotic relationship is further discussed in the section regarding stakeholder engagements.

7.4.4.4 Network succession planning

It emerges that within all three southern non-profit organisations that there is an overt concentration of knowledge in specific individuals which can then have a negative impact on human capital succession planning. This is evident where the role of the executive director is so centralised and totally focused in an individual. No deputy exists, neither is a strategy in place to ensure that someone within the organisation can

step into the role if the need arises. This has an impact on decision-making and knowledge retention within the networked southern NPO.

The leadership in general also does not mirror a wide range of replicable options, and as such, vacancies are either left open for a long period, or in almost all cases, there is a recycling of the same individuals even across the three organisations. This does not give room for differing thinking or perspectives[28]. As the research evidence shows, this poses a threat to continuity within southern non-profit organisations as human capital moves away or becomes irrelevant due to a lack of growth in skills, and in some cases where external commitments override their capacity to deliver.

7.4.5 Systems and procedures

Well skilled and committed human resources, though, are not enough for an organisation to be effective. It has to have in place systems and procedures that guide project identification and implementation, and a learning management strategy. This reflects a commitment to learning from all three networked southern non-profit organisations. They not only jointly identify projects and adapt them for contextualised implementation, they also have varying degrees of systems and procedures in place internally and externally which ensure learning's are well documented and shared.

This is done via communal project identification processes instituted and shared via knowledge communities across the virtual network. In other instances it is driven by synergies created via face-to-face engagements which then feedback into the organisational strategy. As such, key to effective southern non-profit organisations are collaborative virtual knowledge networks, which have a culture of communal project

[28] It should be noted that this retention and or recycling of individuals is at times deliberate to manage external or unknown influences changing the direction of the organisation.

identification, adaptation and learning's.

7.4.5.1 Collaborative virtual knowledge networks

Within all three case studies evidence was found that learning is built into project and or activity plan using virtual spaces as the learning, storage and sharing platform. This is manifested by their research and evaluation orientation with the visible use of the outputs and learning's via its application in projects implemented after these. All three case studies had a wide repertoire of research and evaluation activities whose outputs directly or indirectly inform their continuing delivery of their goals. All three also have an active strategy for obtaining feedback on and offline via their print products and knowledge portals from a range of stakeholders.

Analysis of data collected from the case studies shows there is a culture of collaboration and team orientation not just within the organisations (between staff and the leadership team) but beyond with the involvement of the stakeholders (clients, funders, service providers etc). This manifests as a range of knowledge communities that are either thematic or issue focused.

They include a wide range of stakeholders – from those who are directly impacted by the work of the southern non-profit to activists and policy makers who seek out or are invited to these forums to engage in a 'non-threatening way' on potentially conflicting issues of social change. This was the case in all three case studies with their engagement in the world summit on the information society. These largely virtual groupings are usually outcomes of a project and in a majority of the project precursors to such being identified and implemented.

This is done in a collaborative manner as was the case with SANGONeT's mobile active initiative where information from the network on the potential inherent within mobile usage for delivery of core NPO goals. The discussion then grew and resulted in one of the most interactive meetings happening simultaneously on and offline across

the world.

7.4.5.2 Communal project identification, adaptation and learning's

Systems and procedures to be followed when defining and identifying what issue areas to be involved with project-wise, and how, should be priority for any southern non-profit organisation. In the case studies, the networks or representative subsets are responsible for this.

It should be noted, though, that the existing tendency in most non-profit organisations is to be funding driven. From these case studies it emerges that even if funding is to be a consideration, at all points they adapt such projects such that they have a direct link from, and feedback into, the non-profit organisation's overall mission and vision. This was the case with the joint project on citizen's journalism between a funding organisation, Women'sNet and SANGONet. The donor organisation had an interest in doing work on citizen journalism and the two organisations were then able to adapt their existing work as well as adapt the funder's requirements to fit within their core mission and goals of facilitating and enabling social change.

This is a lesson each of the case study organisations has learnt, and in each case they have had to take an organisational 'pause' to reflect and re-strategise, emerging with a well focused commitment to effectively deliver on their core mission and goals.

7.4.6 Information and knowledge flow

An implemented strategy for the generation, sharing and storage of information is crucial to the continuing existence and effectiveness of networked southern non-profit organisations. Key is the translation and/or adaptation of this information to knowledge that can be utilised, not just by those who have it tacitly, but by 'newbie's' that require it to implement organisational programmes. All three southern NPOs studied in this research had a plethora of knowledge products, activities and portals. These were

harnessed to grow and reach an even wider audience beyond those who directly benefit from their projects and activities.

Only one NPO had as its core mission the goal of being the foremost knowledge provider, though each saw the potential within the outputs from their activities to further increase their activities. These they leveraged via their knowledge of, and access to, information and communications technologies to spread and share outcomes. An over all need identified from all three NPOs studied is a commitment to implement the existing knowledge management strategy internally and externally, translating it beyond the idea and/or the document stage.

7.4.6.1 Articulated internal knowledge management process

The concept of knowledge management has been around for years and has been applied in one form or the other. It is only recently that its active role in organisational development and sustainability has been established. The networked southern non-profit organisations studied had, in one way or another, an interpretation of a knowledge management strategy. This was exhibited in their varied knowledge and information portals.

What was unclear in all three case studies was an internal strategy for managing information and knowledge, which is key to continuing effectiveness as a networked southern non-profit organisation. A lack of clear management of its knowledge internally will eventually affect such a networked NPO's ability to share its many learning's externally.

There was recognition, though, of the need to better address this issue by having a well-articulated strategy; whether formally written out or a set of practices followed with regards to knowledge management.

7.4.6.2 Network driven and developed knowledge products and portals using Web

2.0

All three organisations in this study, in one way or another, have information and communications technologies (ICT) as a key component of their social change efforts. There is also recognition that they consistently have to be at the forefront of getting the word out on what they do, and how they get it done, including how much of an impact such engagements then have. This is reflected in their harnessing ICTs to develop and manage their knowledge products that are then distributed on and offline. Girls'Net has its Gist newsletter, a by-product of its clubs; APC a range of knowledge products from APC news to campaign and project-specific publications such as is produced for the broadband strategy; and SANGONet has its Lwati newsletter which draws on happenings beyond its own organisation, thus keeping its constituents informed and updated.

Their use of technology is centred on the use of interactivity enabling Web 2.0 tools such as NING, Facebook, and Skype amongst others. These serve as the community engagement platforms, knowledge-sharing spaces, as well as actual meeting spaces between a plethora of stakeholders. As a rule, more often than not, where there are physical meetings organised, a virtual space is created where remote participants can also take part in the deliberations in real time.

7.4.7 Stakeholder relations

Social change work occurs in a context that has a myriad of stakeholders – and key to being relevant and effective is knowing who they are and the role they play. These stakeholders differ based on the focus of the southern NPOs in this study. A commonality amongst all three organisations is the recognition of the importance of keeping all stakeholders in the loop.

This is done via the production of newsletters (both electronic and published), regular updates via the web portals, and consistent project-based communications.

7.4.7.1 Stakeholder orientation and engagement across networks

A feedback and input mechanism is also used by all organisations – some more effectively than others. The APC, in particular, could be said to have a very good strategy for engaging its wide network of stakeholders and in securing their input on a range of issues from project-based decision-making to the canvassing and solicitation of support for a policy issue.

The stakeholder engagement practices of these southern NPOs directly impacts their effectiveness as they are able to identify needs first hand, are able to verify interventions prior to implementation, and are also get feedback post roll out. It should be noted that this was not always used by the NPOs but its value is evident in projects and activities that have adopted this strategy.

7.4.7.2 Synergies in virtual spaces and across stakeholder groups

This practice is bolstered by the membership of all three southern non-profit organisations in a variety of networks, including the APC network. The relationships in and across all three networked NPOs can be described as symbiotic – that is, they literally feed off of and into each other across a range of areas, from their specialist areas on social change to leveraging each other's expertise.

The fact that all three NPOs emerged first as projects then morphed into credible institutions is an indication of their having learnt to look beyond the primary organisational boundaries for synergy and opportunities to collaborate. This includes the sharing of human capital, through to sharing outcomes and learnings from projects. This, to a large extent, speaks to the Ubuntu-type of management identified by Broodryk (2005) and discussed in the second chapter of this research.

These synergies, using ICTs, were in play during the WSIS process of which APC led the major policy interventions; SANGONet took the lead in the South African context via its Thetha forums; and Women'sNet led the gender aspects of policy interventions as a leading member of the APC's women's programme.

Synergies across stakeholder groups is also rampant, with smaller organisations leveraging their presence as part of a community of practice within the network to meet and engage with donors and implementation partners that they would otherwise not have had direct access to. This, though, results in some competition for limited resources within the organisation itself, which then results in some cases in a scramble for such. In the case of the APC, the board seat seems to be highly contested as it is perceived as a position of power with direct access to resources. The APC, having recognised this, has tried to put checks and balances in place to ensure that these roles are not abused.

Table 7.2 Practices of KM concepts impacting organisational effectiveness in networked southern non-profit organisations

	ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS RELATED KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT CONCEPTS				
Practices	Governance	People Capacity	Systems & Procedures	Information & Knowledge Flow	Stakeholder Relations
	Participatory and open access to network leadership	Interest + Passion+ Commitment and connectedness	Collaborative Virtual knowledge networks	Articulated Internal knowledge management	Stakeholder orientation and engagement across networks
	Virtual operations	Multiple roles: within and across organisations	Communal project identification and adaptation	Network-driven and developed knowledge products and portals using Web 2.0	Synergies in Virtual Spaces across stakeholder groups
		Succession planning in networks Communal skills sharing and development in virtual learning networks Network succession planning			
	USE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES				

Source: Akinsanmi, 2010.

CHAPTER 8. AN INTEGRATED KM FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE SOUTHERN NPOs

8.1. Introduction

For this study, networked southern NPOs are defined by the focus of their social change efforts and operations in developing countries, by their origination and geographical location in the southern hemisphere, and by their consequent participation in, or membership of, networks focused on related issues. They are characterised by their focus on advocacy and/or development projects with social, political and economic goals. These NPO agendas include the promotion of equitable, democratic societies; the promotion of educational foundations for local economic development; attention to effective community health practices; and environmental protection and human rights, amongst others.

The focus of most networked southern non-profit organisations is centred on influencing key decision-makers and a relatively 'young' private sector (in the wider context of world) by providing services to specific communities, working to transform policy, and strengthening existing relationships among all sectors of society. These differing agendas range from a focus on advocacy to building social capacity to providing social and developmental services to communities.

They advocate by 'lobbying, serving as representatives and advisory experts, conducting research, holding policy influencing conferences, monitoring and exposing the actions (and inactions) of government and the private sector, disseminating information to key constituencies, setting/defining agendas, developing and promoting codes of conduct, and or organizing boycotts' (Hudson, 2002). Southern NPOs contribute to building (or rebuilding) social capacity which typically involves the 'shaping of policy; providing training, resource access, and know-how on service

delivery; sharing best practices; and creating and supporting institutional settings that promote social welfare' (Brown & Kalegaonkar, 2002).

They serve as 'critical safety nets [by] filling voids generated where markets fail, where politically challenged, indebted, or corrupt states are unable or unwilling to provide for unmet needs and where global problems defy neat nation-state responsibilities' (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2002).

This concluding chapter presents lessons that have emerged as important knowledge management practices that influence the networked southern NPO's effectiveness. These networks are made up of individual non-profit organisations as well as other networked organisations. The APC is the largest of all three networked southern non-profit organisations, while SANGONet has a network of organisations that form part of it is also itself a member of the APC. Women'sNet, the smallest of all organisations, is an individual organisation serving a smaller network of gender and feminist focused NPOs, while an individual organisational member of the APC and SANGONet.

The lessons on knowledge management for organisational effectiveness drawn from the study of these networked southern non-profit organisations can be adapted and applied to a wide range of NPOs. This would include those that are looking to extend their reach, and enhance their delivery, connect, build and strengthen their relationships with organizations with similar aims and objectives with the overall goal of improving and increasing effectiveness.

The findings of this study, presented as an integrated framework below, add to the existing theory – i.e. knowledge specific to the networked southern NPO's knowledge management practices that impact on their effectiveness. Its specificity and foundational relationship to non-profit organisations operating in a developing country environment makes it relevant for individual and networked NPOs seeking more effective ways of delivering on their social change agendas.

8.2. Integrated framework on KM practices for NPO organisational effectiveness

This section of the study advances an enhanced theory of knowledge management (KM) for organisational effectiveness in the form of an integrated framework on knowledge management practices using ICTs for effective networked southern NPOs. This theory arises from an understanding that networked southern NPOs conduct their social change activities in ways that highlight the creative adaptation and use of knowledge management practices by leveraging ICTs across economic, social and geographical and barriers.

The framework comprises the knowledge management concepts and related practices that this study has shown as key to organisational effectiveness in networked southern non-profit organisations. Based on the analysis and ensuing discussions on the findings that have emerged from the three case studies, the framework below is an overview of the practices and knowledge management concepts that have been shown to play a major role in their effectiveness. It speaks to what the research has identified as the key building blocks for any southern non-profit organisational network, irrespective of mission, size, location or funding base.

These practices and concepts are the additions to existing theory on knowledge management as a direct contributor to the effectiveness of an organisation. The framework identifies the cross cutting elements as sub-sets of the general KM concepts of existing theory. Based on the research findings, it includes practices from the concept of multiplicity of roles and fluid ToRs, to networked virtual learning organisations through to organisationally relevant ICT adoption and use.

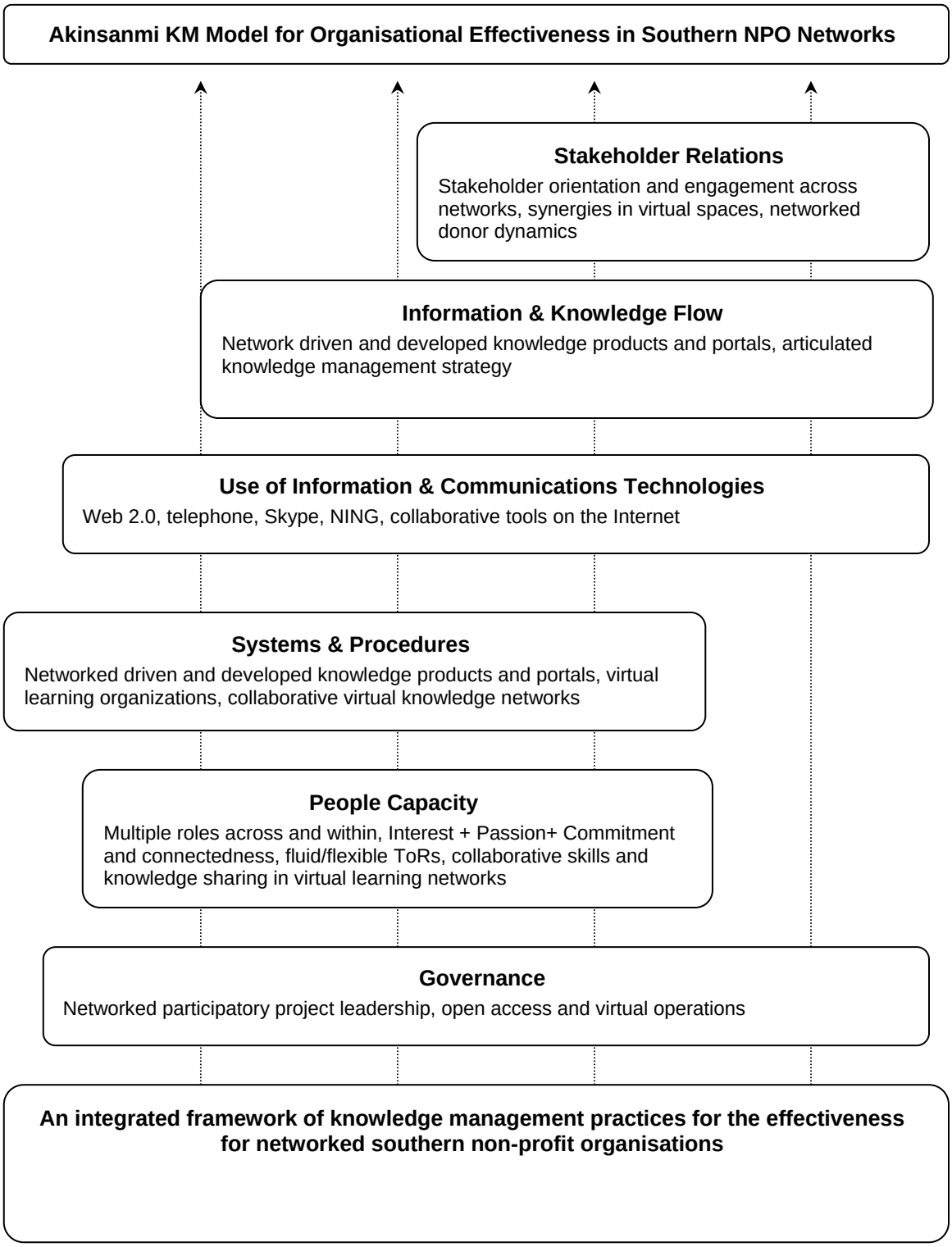

Figure 8.1 Integrated framework on KM practices for organisational effectiveness

Source: Akinsanmi, T.O. 2010

8.3. KM theory: organisational effectiveness for networked southern NPOs

This concluding section presents a discussion of elements to add to the existing body of knowledge on knowledge management theory for organisational effectiveness for networked southern non-profit organisations as identified by this study. These recommendations are made recognising that each networked southern non-profit organisation has its own peculiar characteristics and challenges and thus the recommendations are in no way exhaustive of the key aspects of such a strategy. The key is to achieve and maintain a balance between being adaptable without losing sight of core goals by adopting the following to suit their particular context.

8.3.1 Networked participatory project leadership, KM and organisational effectiveness

Irrespective of geographical location or type, an organisation's leadership has a major part to play in its capability to fulfil its potential for effectiveness. With regards to effectiveness, an organisation lacking a committed and well-focused governing and/or management team can only survive for a particular length of time before its lack of leadership becomes a crisis. It requires not only a committed leadership team but also one that is open, participatory and accessible to its stakeholders.

Networked participatory project leadership can be defined as one where the lead for a project is not limited to the pool of formal management. Rather it's a role that can be taken up by any individual or organisation within the network. It is not assigned, rather it can be, and usually is, volunteered for; though in some cases where there is more than one volunteer it becomes a semi-formalised bidding process. This leadership role is also accessible and participatory due to its consultative nature. Decisions concerning the projects are collaboratively and consultatively reached and

implemented. This leadership team, unlike other non-profit organisations, not only has to be involved in strategic areas but also in some way should be an integral part of actual implementation and delivery.

This team should be at the forefront of shaping any knowledge management strategy as well as seeing to its implementation in the various aspects of the organisation. This continuing connection to all parts of the mission delivery is essential to continuing effectiveness.

8.3.2 People recognition, development, appreciation, retention

Networked southern NPOs need to invest more to recognise, develop, appreciate and celebrate their people capacity. There is a tendency to lose sight of the people at the implementation and delivery end of the organisation. This study shows that networked organisations do have an amazingly talented and diverse pool of human resources that are not always being used effectively.

It is important, though, for consistent effectiveness that the people resources are continually grown by the increased investment in developing and re-skilling the people capacity – in this case by specifically leveraging the relatively diverse pool of skills and people capacity across the networks. A creative way that is in use, though still in its infancy, is the sharing of human resources across projects, organisations and networks – and not necessarily in the same thematic area. They should look within their areas of specialisation and beyond to leverage and share human resources as organisations looking to effectively bring about social change.

To remain relevant in their social change agenda and to effectively implement such, they have to implement and continually update their people development plan – one that will suit their particular organisation and budget. This could be in the form of a conscious and detailed strategy that would show what skills are needed, how they can be gained by leveraging resources in other organisations, retained, and at the same

time show what staff can expect in terms of a career path and/or growth within or beyond the organisation.

It should be mentioned here that closely linked to the recommendation above is having a succession plan in networked southern non-profit organisations. To remain effective over time a strategy for 'replacing, retooling and replenishing' human capital has to be put in place in southern NPOs.

The usual practice of focusing non-profit organisations on individuals is not efficient, effective or sustainable in the longer term.

There is advantage to having a central figure around which activities and projects are driven but there should be a clear mentoring and sharing of the knowledge that lies with such individuals such that their absence does not result in a debilitating vacuum within the NPO.

8.3.3 Networked information and knowledge flows impacting organisational effectiveness

A major part of the strength of the southern non-profit organisations studied is in their generation, use and sharing of information. Their conversion into a variety of knowledge products and activities and their sustained sharing with a wide range of stakeholders is key to their effectiveness. The formal and informal processes in place for managing information ensure that information on any aspect of the non-profit organisation's activities is easily accessible internally and externally with the right authorisations in place.

The addition to the existing body of knowledge on information and knowledge flow in KM is that beyond the role identified to drive the processes, the networks and their individual members are all active participants in the information and knowledge flow

process. They are actively contributing, sharing, adapting and further developing the existing processes while sharing information. This is supported by their active use of ICTs.

Beyond the recognition that networked southern non-profit organisations need to harness their information and knowledge resources to learn and keep informed to remain relevant, there has to be a conscious leveraging of new ICTs (on and offline) to help facilitate the use of these resources. The recommendation is that there be an evolving strategy in place to manage information and knowledge flow – not just tools or technology but a consistent human strategy, involving tacit knowledge being shared, as evidenced in the mobile active initiative, GenARDIS and Gist initiatives of the three case studies.

8.3.4 Creating synergies and leveraging stakeholders from inter- and intra-connected networks

A non-profit organisation would be irrelevant if it was not seeking to 'change' and/or influence positively the livelihoods of a set of people or peoples. Non-profit organisations historically have been berated for forgetting about the very people whose lives they seek to improve, often showing a lack of consultation and failure to report back once interventions are completed.

The three non-profit organisations studied show an active engagement with their particular grouping of stakeholders – consistently consulting with them to better understand their needs, to know how and what they think the necessary solutions are, and also giving them adequate feedback on outcomes of either project or policy processes. This has directly impacted on the perception, as well as actual effectiveness, of these various social change interventions. Stakeholders from government through to donors and funders also come a close second, as without their being informed and involved the longevity (or in other terms, sustainability) of these social change interventions beyond the active participation of the southern non-profit

organisation is jeopardised.

An adaptation of the practice of drawing on 'external' human resources is also strongly recommended. These can be drawn from within and beyond the networks of the southern non-profit organisation and its partners. This translates in varied ways, from having individuals play multiple roles across projects to sharing administration and project staff across organisations and networks. The membership of all three case studies in a larger social change non-profit organisation strengthens their capacity to be effective.

The recommendation, though, is not that all southern non-profit organisations should join up with larger networks but rather these knowledge and human resources can be shared, and where the need arises, partnerships with other non-profit organisations can be initiated. This can help address shortfalls in funding when human and knowledge capital is traded, shared or jointly produced and utilised.

8.3.5 Adaptive use of ICT and KM for organisational effectiveness

The role of ICTs has both been both vilified and praised over the last 15 years, from ICT-based interventions 'marketed' as the complete solution to all the ills plaguing society through to mini-intervention ICT projects in obscure communities that do not think beyond the implementation phase (Hendriks, 2000). This is not what is recommended in this research.

Rather, an adaptive use of technology to help in the implementation of the earlier recommendations made is what is preferred. ICTs occupy a unique place in the 21st century where Web 2.0 technologies help to not only reduce turnaround time on projects but in some cases erase the geographical and time boundaries that in the past prevented effective implementation. Networked southern NPOs should continuously identify their KM-related technological needs alongside the emergence of new applications and ICTs. They need to explore their networks for potential synergies

around the use of ICTs and finally adapt these to suit their needs.

This adaptation does not need to be elaborate as it could be the adaptive use of high or low-end technologies enabling delivery on core missions and goals. SANGONet has created a niche role for itself as a development information portal to the southern African NPO sector providing access to information on issues ranging from health to economic justice.

8.4. Conclusion

In the world today, organisations in the public, private and non-profit sectors are increasingly exhibiting the KM needs studied in this research. These include an ever-growing need to remain consistently well informed, an increased need for well skilled people, and a greater expectation from their stakeholders on effective delivery. The findings of this research address an aspect of the information society discourse at its emergence in the 21st century; in particular how access to information and knowledge is key to the continuing strive for effectiveness by networked southern non-profit organisations.

The impact within networked southern non-profit organisations is the increasing presence of collaborative virtual knowledge networks that transcend physical and organisational boundaries, through to the assignment of multiple roles to their people complement and an increased awareness of active sourcing and access to information that increases the ability to deliver on their set goals and objectives.

These research findings on knowledge management practices of networked southern non-profit organisations can be applied to a range of non-profit organisations or adapted to private sector business networks that operate for non-profit purposes. The proposed integrated framework on knowledge management practices of these organisations can be adapted to fit the contextualised needs of a range of NPOs with the aim of being more effective.

One such organisation is the Centre for Internet and Society in Bangalore,[29] which engages in advocacy with respect to the shape and form of addressing issues of digital pluralism, public accountability and pedagogic practices through multidisciplinary research, intervention, and collaboration. It initiates a wide range of research, advocacy and educational programmes that leverage a network of partner researchers, practitioners, artists, institutions and organisations. It is member-based, and has distinguished fellows who are experts in their areas of work as well as staff members who are directly responsible for the implementation of the organisational strategy.

Another organization that can benefit from this framework is the African Internet registry, Afrinic,[30] based in Mauritius. Afrinic operates as a not-for-profit member-based organisation. It ensures a fair distribution and management of a number of Internet resources in the Africa region. The organisational structure of Afrinic encourages a bottom-up self-governance management model. The Afrinic member community determines policies, strategy and other organisational functions, and its membership is open to members of the public.

It has a regulatory board of directors with a CEO who oversees day-to-day operations.

The Business Council of Latin America (CEAL)[31] fosters regional integration and international interactions through the active role of entrepreneurs. CEAL comprises representatives from all productive sectors – agribusiness, mining, manufacturing industry, banking etc. and stimulates cooperation between business and other social actors. CEAL is a network of 14 national and 11 regional chapters, comprising over

29 www.cis-india.org

30 www.afrinic.net

31 www.ceal-int.org

500 active members across Latin America. It has an executive board led by a president, a board of directors with a representative from each member nation, and a consulting council, which supports the staff in day-to-day organisational business.

These southern NPOs' ability to continue to relevantly contribute to their respective development activities and improve on their roles of influence is very much affected by and dependent on their effectiveness as an organisation. A wide range of networked southern non-profit organisations, individual NPOs, non-profit networks, and public or private sector organisations seeking to be more effective can apply this integrated framework on knowledge management practices for organisational effectiveness. This adds to the body of knowledge on KM theory enabling networked southern NPOs to better recognise and adequately utilise knowledge management processes,

In conclusion, the goal of this research was not to identify and/or develop a prescriptive 'one model fits all' for effective networked southern non-profits; rather it was to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on what practices and concepts are important building blocks to the effectiveness of networked southern non-profit organisations.

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ANNEXURES

Annexure A Survey Introductory Letter

Dear Respondent,

Research Survey: Networked Southern NPOs: Knowledge Management Practices and Organisational Effectiveness

Thank you for accepting to be a part of this study. It is aimed at understanding the dynamics specific to your organization's use of ICTs in the area of people capacity; knowledge and information flow; processes and procedures and stakeholder relations as aspects of knowledge management practice and how these are perceived to contribute to and enable your organization's effectiveness.

This research is being done across three southern NPOs all based in Africa. A comparative analysis will be done with the data gathered and its findings will be shared with all respondents. This is in recognition of the value that understanding the interactions between KM and OE has for the sustainability of southern NPOs and which will add value and increase knowledge available to the general audience of networked NPOs.

Data is being gathered from each NPO via interviews with the people responsible or occupying the roles listed below:

- Executive Director

- Personnel responsible for operations

- Personnel responsible for human resources
- Personnel responsible for Information/Communications/Technology
- Personnel responsible for Stakeholder relationships/Network members
- 3 People/organisations within the Network
- Chair of the Board and One board member
- 2 – 3 Staff Members

Within your organisation, I would be grateful if you could suggest and introduce any other person, you deem relevant for this research process. The preference is for face-to-face interviews and where at all possible (and acceptable within your organisational policy) I would like to spend some time immersed within your organisation to unobtrusively observe its knowledge management practice as well.

Where a face-to-face interview is not feasible, please do feel free to respond to the following questions with as much detail as possible while attaching relevant documentation for analysis. Please return your responses and all relevant documentation including web links to the researcher at titilayo.akinsanmi@wits.ac.za or titi.akinsanmi@gmail.com. Please feel free to ask any questions of clarification. Thank you once again.

Student Name: Ms. Titilayo O. AKINSANMI

Student No: 0616775D

Email: titilayo.akinsanmi@wits.ac.za or titi.akinsanmi@gmail.com

Mobile: +27 83 300 7105

Degree: Masters in Management

Supervisor: Ms. Lucienne Abrahams

Annexure B Semi-structured questionnaires

Cluster 1: Networked Southern NPOs

Please share the background of organization speaking to its history, mission, vision and goals.

What is the makeup of the organization? Please speak to:

Organisational Team (Management (Board et al) and Staff including Volunteer/Consultants)

Projects, activities and events

Stakeholders (Members, Funders, Partners, Recipients)

Cluster 2: Organisational Effectiveness (OE)

How are the activities/goals/events identified?

How are they implemented?

How are the ‘recipients/targets’ of such determined?

How do you determine who does what for each project/events/activity?

Custer 3: Knowledge Management (KM)

How is the information on each event/project/activity sourced prior to implementation?

How is such information shared within the organization?

How is information shared by and with the team?

What is the role-played by each team member in the information sourcing and sharing process?

Cluster 4: Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

What ICT tools are used by your organization?

How are these used in implementing projects/events/activities?

How is the knowledge generated after such projects/events/activities shared within the organization (staff/Management/Members)?

How is the knowledge generated after such projects/events/activities shared beyond the organization (Partners/Funders/Recipients/Other stakeholders?

Annexure C Interview schedule

It should be noted that prior to initiating this research, it was discovered that some of the personnel within the case studies serve dual roles. This was factored into the data gathering process by adapting the questions to delve into the multiple roles occupied across and beyond their organizations.

July 1 – 8 Association for Progressive Communications

Executive Director

Chief Operating Officer/Human Resources Officer

Chief Information/Communications/Technology Officer

Stakeholder Relationships Officer

3 People within the Network/Board Members

2 – 3 Staff Members

July 11 – 15 SANGONet

Executive Director

Chief Operating Officer/Human Resources Officer

Chief Information/Communications/Technology Officer

Stakeholder Relationships Officer

3 People within the Network/Board Members

2 – 3 Staff Members

July 18 – 22 WOMEN'SNET

Executive Director

Chief Operating Officer/Human Resources Officer

Chief Information/Communications/Technology Officer

Stakeholder Relationships Officer

3 People within the Network/Board Members

2 – 3 Staff Members

July 25 – 29 2nd Round of Interviews